

GERMANY THE AGGRESSOR
THROUGHOUT THE AGES

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To the Memory of
ALFRED, LORD MILNER
Patriot and far-sighted Statesman

and to
LADY MILNER
who suggested this book

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FOREWORD

By SIR THOMAS H. HOLLAND, K.C.S.I.

PROFESSOR HEARNSHAW, a recognised and reliable historian, has drawn in this book a sketch of the Germanic peoples from the time when they began to swarm over the plains of Northern Italy and Southern Gaul in 113 B.C. down to the invasion of Poland in September 1939. According to this distinguished authority the record is one of unbroken consistency; the Germans have never been without unscrupulous leaders, and have never failed to support their ‘exemplars of the Machiavellian principles of the use of force and fraud as instruments of politics’.

That may be true of the past; but the question of prime importance for the world just now is to find whether this historical record shows a development on lines parallel to those of the accepted characteristics of civilisation, or whether it indicates any real divergence of a kind which a naturalist would recognise as due to the evolution of a new sub-species. And if this latter alternative be indicated, when did the branching-off from the civilised stock occur? Or is it, perhaps, only a temporary and therefore recoverable departure from the normal? The present distinct races of mankind must have all started at some time and must have found their environments favourable for perpetuation. Many others branched off too from the parent stock, but later, through unfavourable conditions, became extinct. One cannot, for example, accept such incidents as Bismarck’s falsification of a telegram as sufficient reason to condemn a whole nation; for even he also told the truth to deceive (pp. 182, 183). Count Cavour, the greatest of Italian Prime Ministers,

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stated in one of his Memoirs that he also found this to be one way of misleading diplomatists.

But Hitler has achieved a temporary success in deceiving his own people in a novel way by openly declaring that 'the very enormity of a lie contributes to its success. . . . The masses of the people easily succumb to it. . . . Even if the clearest proof of its falsehood is forthcoming, something of the lie will nevertheless stick.' (*Mein Kampf*, Germ. Ed., p. 252.) It is the persistence of these residual dregs of Hitlerism which will seriously hamper honest German representatives when they come to the ultimate peace conference. Even now such practices neutralise their pathetic efforts at propaganda by suggesting to the world that the Germans represent possibly a few racial sub-species, marked by a degree of mental astigmatism which makes it physically impossible for them to receive or to emit the truth without distortion. Their lies, too, are quite novel and original in character, generally carrying their own contradictions with them, thus becoming recognised outside by the distinctive term of 'Goebbels.' Sporadic instances of departure from the normal occur, of course, in all branches of our species; and in civilised communities such atavistic 'sports' are generally given suitable 'protection.'

The late Professor Wilfred Trotter, who had an uncanny instinct for recognising and classifying human characteristics, stated in a letter to the *Times*, three weeks after the war started, that

The events of the last fortnight have strengthened the long gathering opinion that the adversaries in the present war are separated not by mere political disagreement but by differences in their attitude towards life which practically amount to incompatible types of civilisation. . . . That some such view of the war has been reached by the intuitive

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judgment of [our] people is made probable by the unanimity—perhaps unique—with which they have accepted it. . . . There seems very clearly to be something in an absolutist system which, perhaps by denying the mind free play, succeeds in depriving it of some of its more vigorous and penetrating aptitudes. A good deal of German wireless propaganda seems to proceed from backward children—indeed its markedly infantile faith in the power of the mere lie is very pronounced.

When new varieties of organisms arise from a parent stock, each new characteristic displayed is always accompanied by others; and it must be obvious to anyone by now that, besides its deliberate and open resort to mendacity, Hitlerism is characterised by other departures from the normal lines of evolution among civilised communities—the recently increased aggressiveness proclaimed as a prelude to world domination; openly published novel forms of bestial brutality in dealing with smaller conquered nations; a complete atrophy of the sense of humour, as shown for instance by the banning of Mendelssohn's music because the composer was of Jewish ancestry; a spurious claim to the monopoly of the label 'Aryan,' which was coined with a quite different meaning by Mendelssohn's godson, who became an English naturalised subject *; the manufacture of new 'histories' for school children, and many other departures from ordinary civilised habits.

Professor Hearnshaw's history suggests that the special characters which have been manifested recently in intensified forms by the German people should be distinguished as Prussianism; if so, the disease might have some limited racial origin, might be localised, and therefore might be dealt with by special political disinfectants or surgery.

* F. Max Müller's *Science of Language*, 6th Edition, 1871.

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But Hitler is racially not a Prussian ; yet his declared policy seems to have been endorsed by the whole nation. No democratic Government in the world, for instance, could possibly force its sailors to bomb and shoot unarmed fishermen, to torpedo, in the open ocean, merchantmen who are more often of neutral than belligerent nations. If this insanity is of Prussian origin, the disease must have already spread to the brachycephalic races of Southern Germany as well ; and the problem before the Allied Governments therefore will not be quite so simple as dealing with an uneducated fanatic like Hitler and the degenerate sycophants who form his 'Government.' Wilfred Trotter knew the difficulty of reshaping the psychological configuration of a horde. This is not a war over dynastic claims, economic competitions, or territorial rights, which might be settled by some form of compromise ; we are up against a definite departure from recognised standards of civilisation.

The great contribution which many Germans gave in the past to the whole body of cultural subjects is still often, and rightly, quoted ; but less often is mentioned the fact that the principal output was after 1870, when the Jews were emancipated, admitted to the Universities and to other forms of citizenship, including even intermarriage with Germans. Since 1933 the Universities have been wholly denuded of their 'liberal' professors, the output of research has almost stopped, and, more than ever before, the Germans seem now to have lost all capability of understanding the mentality of other nations.

Professor Hearnshaw has rightly named his epilogue '*Germania contra Mundum*' . His authoritative book takes a special place of its own among the foundation data necessary for studying the new phenomenon of Hitlerism.

EDINBURGH, March 1940.

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CHAPTER I

EARLY TRIBAL WARS

I

‘THE Germans are a militant and aggressive people.’ This remark, made by an Englishman, was not uttered in any censorious or consciously superior tone. For the speaker went on to admit that the English themselves were originally Germanic in origin, manifesting all the belligerent characteristics of their Continental kin. This is true; and if the English have outgrown their primal bellicosity and have become peace-loving, their freedom from the war-spirit is largely due to the facts that the sea has given them security, and the possession of sea-power an empire.

In sharp contrast to the insular security of England, and to the clear definition of her frontiers by the circumambient ocean, is Germany’s exposure to attack from every quarter of the compass, and her complete lack of natural boundaries. Particularly on the east and on the west have her frontiers fluctuated widely. Eastward in the early Middle Age Germanic tribes roamed dominantly as far as the Vistula. Westward, in the days of the Frankish ascendancy,

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Teutonic rule extended to the shores of the Atlantic. This uncertainty as to territorial limits, and the resultant ceaseless conflicts with bordering peoples—Slavs and Huns on the one side, Celts and Latins on the other—almost inevitably kept the Germans in a chronic state of war or war-readiness. They became notorious as fighters, and as little more than fighters, unless it were brawlers. For the name ‘German,’ which was bestowed upon them by their neighbours and not by themselves, means, according to one etymology, ‘spear-men,’ and, according to another, ‘shouters.’ Even their women displayed the militant characteristics of the race. For they were accustomed to accompany the men to war, and to incite them by their clamour to deeds of daring and ferocity.

II

The original homes of the Germanic peoples would appear to have been along the shores of the North Sea and the Baltic, from the lower waters of the Rhine to those of the Oder. The Germans consisted of numerous wandering tribes who, when they were not fighting, lived mainly by hunting amid the forests and heathlands of that inhospitable region. Pressure of population, however, and desire for an easier life, continually tended to drive them westward across the Rhine into Gaul, and southward across the Alps into Italy. They made their first

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dramatic appearance in the pages of recorded history when in 113 B.C. and the following years a vast host of them, with their women and children, swarmed like locusts over the plains of Northern Italy and Southern Gaul. Mr Baring-Gould describes them thus :

They had fair hair, thick and long; some had shaggy red hair. They were tall, strong men; their eyes were blue. They wore the heads of wolves and bears and oxen on their helmets, the latter with horns; and others again had the wings of eagles spread, and fastened to their iron caps.

He depicts the horrors of their invasion :

They destroyed the villages they came upon; they took and burned the cities; they overran the plains. They killed the horses they took, and hanged their captives to trees as sacrifices to Woden.

Three Roman armies in succession were defeated by them, and not until the full force of the Republic was mustered against them under Marius were they finally crushed and all but exterminated in the two great battles of Aquae Sextiae (Aix) in Gaul (102 B.C.), and Campi Raudii (near Vercellae) in Italy (101 B.C.). We know very little of these 'Cimbri et Teutones' who thus harassed Rome for a dozen years and then met their proper fate. They seem to have been tribes from the low country between the mouths of the Rhine and the Elbe, who had been

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driven from their native haunts by the encroachment of the sea, and so had migrated southward in a mass, fighting all the way.

III

The next time we meet the Germans in the pages of history we come upon them once again as invaders of Gaul. And on this occasion we are privileged to learn much more about them. For the Roman general whose task it was to deal with them was none other than the great Julius Caesar himself, who not only defeated them and drove them back across the Rhine, but also left illuminating descriptions of them in the immortal pages of his *Gallic War*.* The first of the Germanic aggressors was Ariovistus, a Suevic chief from the region of modern Bavaria. About 70 B.C. he had led his hosts across the Rhine, somewhere in the neighbourhood of Basle, had occupied Alsace and Upper Burgundy, and seemed likely to establish his dominion over the whole country. Caesar, being determined to save his Gallic allies, the Aedui, from subjugation, and to safeguard the Roman Province (modern Provence) from devastation, demanded the evacuation of the occupied territory. Ariovistus, in a reply which for studied insolence could hardly be improved upon by a present-day German aggressor, repudiated Caesar's claim to speak for the peoples of Gaul,

* Book IV, Chapters 1-3, and Book VI, Chapters 19-23.

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refused to move, and announced his intention of extending his conquests to the Atlantic seaboard. Caesar responded in the only language that he could understand, namely, decisive defeat in battle. He completely routed the Suevic hosts near to modern Belfort, and drove the few survivors in headlong flight back into their own place (58 B.C.). Three years later, just before his first expedition to Britain, Caesar had to deal with two other German tribes (the Usipetes and Tencteri) who had taken possession of Gallic territory between the Rhine and the Meuse (part of modern Belgium). Having in vain tried to persuade them to recross the Rhine, he fell upon them with great slaughter, and, having bridged the Rhine near the site of modern Bonn, he chased them back to the forests whence they had emerged. He did not, however, remain in Germany. After a stay of a little over a fortnight he returned, destroying his bridge. The Rhine became the dividing line between Roman Gaul and Barbaric Germany.

IV

What has Caesar to say about these savage and aggressive peoples to whom he had to teach so severe a lesson? He depicts a vast agglomeration of tribes still semi-nomadic, intensely hostile to one another, living in a state of perpetual conflict. 'Their whole life,' he says, 'is addicted to hunting and war, and

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from their infancy they are inured to fatigue and hardships.' He then continues :

Agriculture is little regarded among them, as they live mostly on milk, cheese, and the flesh of animals. Nor has any man lands of his own, or distinguished by fixed boundaries. The magistrates and those in authority portion out yearly to every canton and family such a quantity of land and in such a part of the country as they think proper, and the year following move them to some other spot.

He adds that one of the reasons for their doing so is 'lest, seduced to habit and continuance, they should learn to prefer tillage to war.' Each tribe, however, has its own sphere of influence which it jealously guards.

It is accounted honourable for states to have the country all around them lie waste and depopulated; for they think it an argument of valour to expel their neighbours and suffer none to settle near them.

Raids into their neighbours' preserves, however, are encouraged :

Robbery has nothing infamous in it when committed outside the territories of the state to which they belong. They even pretend that it serves to exercise their youth, and prevent the growth of sloth.

Of the Sueves, or Swabians of Southern Germany, Caesar (at the beginning of Book IV) gives a more particular account :

The Suevi are by far the most warlike and con-

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siderable of all the German nations. They are said to be composed of a hundred cantons each of which sends yearly into the field a thousand armed men. The rest who continue in their several districts, employ themselves in cultivating their lands, that they may furnish a sufficient supply both for themselves and for the army. These again take up arms the following campaign, and are succeeded in the care of the lands by the troops that served the year before. Thus they live in the continual exercise of both agriculture and war.

It will be observed that an annual campaign is taken for granted. The Suevic chieftains met every spring not to discuss whether or not to go on a raiding expedition, but merely to decide whom to attack. They kept an unusually wide belt of devastated territory round themselves so that their designs might be formed and organised in secret.

It is accounted much to the honour of the nation to have the country for a great way round them waste and uninhabited, for by this they think is intimated that the united force of many states has been found insufficient to stand their single valour. Hence it is that on one side the country is said to be desolate for the space of six hundred miles.

There can be no doubt that Julius Caesar rendered a permanent service of inestimable value to humanity by preventing the imminent conquest of Gaul by the German barbarians in the first century before the Christian era.

V

The Rhine frontier between Gallia and Germania as fixed by Caesar was not intended either by him or by his successors to be the final line of division. They all of them for half a century or more contemplated the reduction and civilisation of Germania herself. It was felt to be too dangerous to have the restless, half-starved hordes of predatory Teutons continually pressing upon the confines of the Roman Commonwealth of Nations. Hence numerous expeditions across the Rhine were made during the period 50 B.C. to A.D. 39, some of which resulted in considerable conquests. The general aim appears to have been to reduce to the Roman obedience all the territory lying between the Rhine and the Elbe. If this aim had been achieved the whole subsequent course of European history would have been radically different from what it has actually been. For the tragedy of Germania (as of Hibernia) has been that it has never been subjected to the magistral discipline of Rome. Four centuries of the *Pax Romana* converted the Celtic and Ivernian tribesmen of Gaul into civilised Latins, rich in their culture and humanity, and proud of their citizenship in the great Empire of the Caesars. Meantime beyond the Rhine the Germanic nations continued to seethe in their barbaric conflicts.

Unhappily, however, the Roman efforts to reduce

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and occupy Western Germania ended in disaster. In A.D. 9 a Roman army operating in the region now known as Hanover—through the incompetence of its leader Quintilius Varus, and the gross treachery of one of his German officers, the Cheruscian Hermann (Latinised ‘Arminius’)—was led into an ambush in the Teutoberg Forest and utterly exterminated. It was a disaster of the first magnitude, the most serious blow that had fallen on Rome since Cannae, and it caused the Emperor Augustus to abandon the project of reducing and civilising Germany. He withdrew once more to the Rhine and concerned himself for the short remainder of his reign mainly with the task of rendering that frontier (together with the line of the Danube) secure against the raids of the marauding Teutons.

VI

The defence of the Rhine against the Germans was entrusted to eight legions divided among six permanent camps—Bonn, Neuss, Xanten; Mainz, Strasburg, and Windisch (near Basle)—and a flotilla of patrolling boats. Similar forces held the line of the Danube. The weak spot of this Rhine-Danube frontier lay in the hilly region where the two great rivers have their so-nearly-contiguous rise. Hence this region, where once the Helvetii had dwelt before their migration into Switzerland, was gradu-

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ally annexed and colonised by Rome, lands being assigned to retired veterans and others (A.D. 73 et seq.). The lands so acquired—generally known as the *Agri Decumates*, the modern Black Forest region—were ultimately defended from German invasion by the so-called *Limes Rhaeticus et Germanicus* (an ancient prototype of the Maginot Line), a fortified barrier extending from the Rhine below Coblenz, by way of the valleys of the Main and the Neckar, to the neighbourhood of Regensburg on the Danube. So long as these frontiers held firm the peaceful lands which they protected were able to develop securely under the influence of the maturing Roman law and the spreading Christian religion.

But beyond the frontiers the Germanic barbarians continued to rove and rage, at constant war with one another, and a perpetual menace to the peace of the Empire. The menace, indeed, steadily grew greater. For, on the one hand, tranquillity and luxury tended to sap the virility of the Romans : from one cause or another the population of the Empire positively declined, and the recruiting of the legions became increasingly difficult. On the other hand, the numbers of the barbarians rapidly mounted up, and the pressure upon the means of subsistence became ever more intense. The Romans were under no illusions respecting the Germanic danger. It is interesting to note that they insisted on the ‘demilitarisation of the Rhineland.’ They refused to

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allow any Germanic settlements along the right bank of the great river. Mommsen compares this unpeopled territory to the glacis of a fortress stripped bare for the purposes of defence. More than once the Germans tried to occupy it, but on every occasion, so long as Rome remained strong, they were driven out. Fortunately for Rome, the inter-tribal feuds of the Germans prevented them for a couple of centuries from combining effectively to rush the Rhineland and break the barrier. The historian Tacitus, who observed them carefully about the year A.D. 100, uttered the fervent prayer that 'the tribes of Germany may continue, if not to love the Romans, at least to hate one another; for, while the destiny of empire is driving us forward, Fortune can give us nothing better than disunion among our enemies.' *

VII

Tacitus not only dreaded but also admired the Germans. He saw the Romans losing their antique virtues and rapidly degenerating under the influence of the ease that came from tranquillity, and the luxury provided by the wealth that poured into Italy from the subject provinces of the East. Writing his short but vigorous pamphlet, *De Situ, Moribus, et Populis Germaniae*, about a century and a half after the date of Caesar's *Commentaries*, and at a safe distance from the objects of his eulogy, he contrasted the

* Tacitus, *Germania*, Chapter 33.

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primitive virtues of the Teutons—their courage, their patriotism, their devotion to their chiefs, their sexual morality, and so on—with the vices of the great city which had become the seat of imperial power.

He depicts a people distinctly more advanced than those described by Caesar. They wander less widely, they pay more attention to agriculture, their political organisation is more highly developed, they are decidedly more civilised and less barbaric. But the addiction to war remains unchanged. ‘They hate peace,’ he says, so that

If their native state sink into tranquillity and repose, many noble youths volunteer for service with tribes
- who are waging some war, for only by violence and warfare can they maintain their large body of followers. Indeed, the followers look to the liberality of their chief for their warhorse and their victorious blood-stained lance. For they receive no pay beyond rude though abundant feasts. War and rapine provide means for the chief’s munificence. Nor is it so easy to persuade them to plough the earth and await a harvest, as to challenge a foe and win honourable scars. They even think it feeble to win with sweat what can be won with blood.

He has to admit that these predatory German warriors are drunken and quarrelsome :

No one is disgraced by passing a whole day and night in drinking. As might be expected from those who drink so deeply, their frequent quarrels seldom end with words, but more often with wounds and bloodshed.

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Moreover, they treat their slaves with extreme brutality :

They often kill them, not from motives of systematic discipline, but in the rage of passion.

VIII

The vigorous measures taken by the Julian and Flavian emperors to defend the frontiers of their dominions were effective for some two hundred years. The impenetrable barrier presented by the Roman legions and fleets compelled the Germans—to use the expressive phrase of Bismarck—to ‘stew in their own juice.’ During that period, however, a considerable change took place in the relations between the two peoples. There was a great deal of interpenetration. On the one hand, Roman traders visited Germany in large numbers in order to barter articles of luxury from the East with the furs and skins and other products of the Teutonic forests. Moreover, as Christianity spread, missionaries, mainly of the Arian persuasion, became active among them, weaning them from the worship of Woden. On the other hand, and far more important, Germans in great multitudes were taken into the service of the Empire. The decline of population, already mentioned, began to cause large areas of land, particularly in the neighbourhood of the frontiers, to fall out of cultivation. Hence whole tribes of German agriculturists were from time to

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time allowed to cross the rivers and settle as subjects of the emperor. Still more notably, the decay of the military quality of the Italian peoples compelled the emperors to draw more and more upon German warriors for the recruiting of their armies. Ultimately, whole tribes, under their native chieftains, were taken into the Roman service, under the name of *foederati*, and planted within the limits of the empire. They proved to be dangerous and treacherous servants.

In spite, however, of this mutual interpenetration, the relations of Romans and Germans remained one of hostility and suspicion. The peaceful and prosperous provinces of Gaul, Spain, Italy, and Greece presented an irresistible lure to the poverty-stricken barbarians of Central Europe. The habit of banditry was ineradicable. As a recent historian says :

Their fighting men loved nothing better than to raid a Roman town, and bring back everything that was portable to their wattled homes on the borders of the forest and the fen. They would barter when they were not fighting, but the raided treasures were the sweetest, and many a German home was full of spoils from Gaul and Rhaetia.*

IX

The first serious indication that the Rhine and Danube frontiers were not destined to hold firm for ever came in the reign of the great and good emperor, Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 167). For some

* L. Sergeant, *The Franks*, p. 39.

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time before that date the pressure on the river fronts had been ominously increasing. The German populations were rapidly growing: although still for the most part pagan, the lusty tribesmen were instinctively obeying the first Biblical command ever given to man—‘Be fruitful and multiply.’ While, moreover, they were continually requiring a larger area of *Lebensraum*, they were being restricted on their eastern flank by the steady advance of the still more prolific Slavonic folk who were taking over from them their valleys of both the Vistula and the Oder. And behind the Slavs the terrible nomads of the Asiatic steppes were on the move, driven westward by the fateful desiccation of their immemorial pasture-lands. The gigantic migrations of the epoch-making *Völkerwanderung* were about to begin. The weakening dykes of civilisation could with difficulty keep back the rising floods of barbarism. In A.D. 167 the invading hosts were mainly composed of the Marcomanni from Bohemia and the Quadi from Moravia. The barrier that they momentarily breached was that part of the Danube that covered Rhaetia, Noricum, and Pannonia (parts of modern Bavaria, Austria, and Hungary). Having overwhelmed the frontier guards, they ravaged the three exposed provinces and penetrated even as far as Aquileia in Northern Italy. Their success, however, was but a brief one. The emperor in person took the field, and at the head of invincible legions drove

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the marauders back over the river, followed them into their own country, and inflicted upon them so severe a chastisement that they never fully recovered their aggressive power. The task was a long one : it was only just completed when the great emperor died in A.D. 180.

The devastation wrought by the marauding Germans was terrible. Their wanton destruction had laid waste countless peaceful villages, their foul and filthy presence had rendered fine cities uninhabitable. Marcus Aurelius, although he had expelled the invaders and had severely punished them, was under no illusions as to the magnitude of the menace which their incursions implied. His closing hours were rendered tragic by the vision of impending calamity.

So effective, however, was the castigation that he had administered to the Marcomanni and Quadi that the Danube frontier was allowed to repose in comparative tranquillity for more than half a century. It was in the region of the Rhine that the German peril next displayed itself. And the people who now began to menace the peace of Roman Gaul were, strange to say, peoples whose names had been wholly unknown to either Tacitus or Caesar. They were the 'Alemanni' on the Upper Rhine and the 'Franci' on the Lower. Who were these Alenians and Franks ? The answer is eloquent of the exigencies of the times. They were, each of them, federations of tribes. The name 'Aleman' (whence comes the present-day

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'Alleinagne') simply means 'all men,' and it connotes a union of the multitudinous tribes of Southwest Germany—Hermunduri, Juthungi, Brisgavi, Bucinobantes, Lentienses, and countless others. Similarly in North-west Germany the numerous tribes mentioned by Caesar and Tacitus as dwelling near the frontier—the Chatti, Chamavi, Bructeri, Sugambri, etc., etc., henceforth rarely, if ever, heard of separately—had been welded into an amalgamation of 'axe men,' wielders of the *franciscus*, the 'Franks,' destined to play an immense part in mediaeval history, and to change the name of Gaul to 'France.' The fusion of these ancient tribes—many of them enemies to one another from time immemorial—speaks more loudly than any chronicle possibly could, of the tremendous pressure to which these people were subjected. West of them lay the rigid barrier of the Roman frontier; east of them surged the hungry and militant multitudes of the other Germanic tribes,* the encroaching Slavs, and the terrible advancing Huns. The cry of the Alemans and the Franks for *Lebensraum* was not an artificial one: it was, indeed, a cry to be saved from extinction by *peine forte et dure*. The Roman barrier had to give way.

* Immediately behind the Franks were the 'Saxons,' or 'sword men,' another amalgamation of tribes. The pressure on *them* ultimately became so great that, although not naturally maritime, large numbers of them were compelled to take to the sea and find new homes in Britain. Saxons and Franks were deadly and inveterate enemies.

X

The Alemans first came into conflict with the Romans about A.D. 213. They attacked the frontier of the Empire at its weakest point, namely, the *Limes Rhaeticus et Germanicus* which linked the Rhine and the Danube. The details of half a century of war are obscure, but by A.D. 260 the whole of the *Agri Decumates*, as well as part of Rhaetia, had passed into permanent Germanic occupation.

The absorption of the Romans in the defence of Southern Gaul against the Alemans provided the occasion for formidable incursions of the Franks into the Northern province. The first attack was delivered in A.D. 253, and before many years had passed the Franks had succeeded in establishing themselves on the left bank of the Lower Rhine. They were a difficult foe to deal with, for not only were they foul fighters, but they were also infidels with whom no binding agreements could be made. Says Gibbon, 'an inconstant spirit, a thirst for rapine, and a disregard for the most solemn treaties disgraced the character of the Franks.' Mr Sergeant makes the same remarks concerning the ancient Germans generally: 'A Roman general opposed to the countrymen of Hermann could never hold himself safe under the terms of a truce.' * Bottomless treachery as well as merciless ferocity marked all the race.

* L. Sergeant, *The Franks*, p. 47.

XI

In the third century of the Christian era, what with the Alemans in the south and the Franks in the north, it seemed as though Gaul were destined to be speedily and completely submerged by the Germanic invaders. For Rome was in no condition to maintain an adequate defence. She herself was distracted by a long series of debilitating civil wars due largely to the fact that she had recruited her armies so extensively from faithless and plunder-loving Germans. Between the years A.D. 211-284 there were no fewer than twenty-three Roman emperors, of whom all but three met with violent deaths. To be proclaimed emperor by a Roman army at this time was equivalent to a sentence of death to be carried into effect at an unspecified date within three years. In such circumstances invasion and conquest were comparatively easy. The imminent disruption of the Roman empire, and the submergence of nascent civilisation by insurgent barbarism, was, however, prevented, or at any rate postponed, by the efforts and genius of two outstanding rulers, namely, Diocletian (A.D. 284-305) and Constantine the Great (A.D. 306-337).

Diocletian, abolishing all relics of obsolete republicanism, converted the empire into a military autocracy of the oriental type. To prevent the recurrence of armed rebellions he separated the civil from the

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military organisation. To restore the defences of the frontiers he divided the empire into four praefectures, himself (with residence at Nicomedia) taking charge of the praefecture of Illyricum, while three colleagues, appointed by himself, were made responsible respectively for the praefectures of the Orient, Italy, and Gaul. Gaul was cleared of its German invaders, both Franks and Alemanni, and the frontier fortifications once again put into repair. When in A.D. 305 Diocletian vacated his throne and retired to the tranquillity of a villa in his native Dalmatia, he had accomplished a task almost incredibly great, namely, the restoration and reconstitution of the Roman Empire. In one thing only he had failed, and the consciousness of failure was probably the chief cause of his retirement. He had failed to stamp out the Christian Church. He had tried to do so in all good faith; for the unity of the Empire in the third century had been wrecked not only by military revolts but also by fierce conflicts between crescent Christianity and resistant Paganism. Having re-established discipline in the army, and expelled the barbarians, he had put forth all his energies to suppress the bishops. The persecution for a few years was terrible, but it served to purge and purify the Church rather than to destroy it. It became clear that the Church was indestructible. Hence Constantine the Great who, after a period of conflict, succeeded in securing the supreme power,

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determined to seek the religious re-unification of the Empire on a Christian, instead of a Pagan, basis. By an instrument commonly, though not quite correctly, called the 'Edict of Milan' (A.D. 313), he recognised Christianity as a legal religion, and gave it his patronage.

Religious peace having been achieved, Constantine continued the work of reorganisation and defence begun by Diocletian. He defined the four praefectures more exactly, dividing them for administrative purposes into dioceses and provinces. He strengthened the defences of the Empire, and in the process did a thing that makes his reign for ever notable. He moved the centre of the Empire from Rome to a 'New Rome,' called after him 'Constantinople,' on the Bosphorus (A.D. 330). The reasons for this removal were, no doubt, partly religious. For 'New Rome' was free from the pagan associations of the old city: it was Christian from the start. But the main causes were certainly military and political. For in Constantine's time the most imminent Germanic threats to the Empire came not from the Franks and Alemans on the Rhine but from the Goths and their kindred on the Danube.

XII

The Goths and their kinsmen the Gepidae were amongst the most easterly of the Germanic peoples. According to their own traditions their original

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homes were in Scandinavia. But they had early crossed over the Baltic Sea and had established themselves along the lower reaches of the Oder and the Vistula. They were, however, the most migrant of all the Germanic races. They persistently pushed their way up the valleys of the two rivers, passed thence, on the one hand, over the Carpathian mountains into the plains of modern Hungary until they reached the Danube; and on the other hand, entered the valleys of the Pruth and the Dniester, and debouched upon the shores of the Black Sea. Here was, indeed, a new menace to the security of the Roman Empire. The Goths first came into conflict with the imperial troops about A.D. 235. Three years later they broke through the defences of the Lower Danube and raided Moesia (modern Bulgaria). From that date attacks were almost annual events. The province of Dacia (modern Rumania), which Trajan had colonised about A.D. 101, was so incessantly assailed for many years that about A.D. 270 the Romans entirely abandoned it, and the Goths took possession. The Gothic menace became still more formidable when the marauders took to the sea, forced their way through the Bosphorus, sacked Byzantium (the nucleus of the later Constantinople), passed into the Mediterranean, and ravaged the coasts of Greece and Asia Minor. It was high time for Diocletian and Constantine to concentrate their attention upon the task of countering this new and unexpected German aggression.

CHAPTER II

EARLY MEDIAEVAL WARS

I

THE conversion of Constantine to Christianity and the founding of Constantinople may be said to have presaged the beginning of the Middle Age. For the Middle Age was essentially the millennium dominated by barbarians and bishops. On the one hand, the barbarians—Germans, Slavs, Asiatic Nomads—gradually wore down the Roman resistance and overran the Empire, although it was not until A.D. 1453 that the last wave of them, the Ottoman Turks, captured Constantinople itself and finally extinguished the long line of the Caesars. On the other hand, the Christian Church, recognised as lawful by Constantine, rapidly rose to ascendancy, crushed out paganism, prevented the rise of heresy, and took in hand the gigantic task of converting and civilising the conquering barbarians. Whatever of culture and humanity was carried over from Ancient Greece and Rome to the national states of Modern Europe was conveyed either by the secular power that lingered at Byzantium or by the new spiritual power that gradually centred itself in Rome.

II

The reorganisation and refortification of the Empire effected by Diocletian and Constantine sufficed to hold the Germans (and others, with whom we are not concerned) in check for a couple of generations. But the menace of their aggression was ever present, and the pressure of their numbers continued to increase. It would be wearisome to tell of all their raids and of Roman reprisals. Mention, however, must be made of the campaigns of Julian, the young Caesar of Constantine's house, who later became emperor. In A.D. 355 he was sent to take command in Gaul. He found both Franks and Alemans on the warpath. They had destroyed the fortifications on the frontier from Cologne to Strasburg, had overthrown forty-five walled towns, and had taken possession of large tracts on the left bank of the Rhine. With great energy and skill he took up the task of driving them back. He began by expelling the Franks from Cologne, and forcing them to make peace. He had harder work in dealing with the Alemans; for he was faced by a host of 35,000 led by seven tribal kings. The decisive battle was fought near Strasburg. Roman discipline prevailed at length over barbarian numbers and ferocity. The Alemans were scattered in flight, and the Roman frontiers restored (A.D. 357). Julian it was who recognised

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the importance of Paris, took up his abode there, and made it, what it has been ever since, the main base of resistance to German aggression.

Julian was recalled to the East before he had completed the refortification of the Rhineland, and his successors in Gaul had hard work to keep the frontier intact. Two successive Emperors—Valentinian (A.D. 365) and Gratian (A.D. 378)—had in person to lead great armies into the threatened region. Each of them was victorious, and when Gratian died (A.D. 383) the Rhine frontier seemed to be once more secure.

But meantime the peril on the Danubian frontier had become more acute. The Goths had firmly established themselves on the northern bank of the river (modern Rumania), and along the coast of the Black Sea as far as, and including, the Crimea. They were divided into two main groups separated roughly by the River Pruth: to the east of that river lay the Ostrogoths, to the west the Visigoths. During the strong reigns of Diocletian, Constantine, and Constantius friendly relations were maintained between the Romans and their formidable neighbours. Not only was commerce developed, but missionary activity on the part of the Greek Christians was great. The notable scholar and evangelist Ulfilas translated the Bible into the Gothic tongue, and won over considerable sections of both Ostrogoths and Visigoths to the Arian form

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of Christianity. Friendly relations, however, ceased soon after the death of Constantius in A.D. 361. Raids and counter-raids began, interrupted only by furious civil wars among the Goths themselves. This state of things might have continued indefinitely and indecisively had it not been for the entry upon the European scene of new actors whose advent marked a revolutionary change in the situation. The new-comers were the Huns.

III

The Huns were a branch of the vast host of Mongolian nomads who with their flocks and herds traversed in incessant migration the steppes of Central Asia. They were terrible warriors, living on horseback, always equipped for the fight, merciless in their savagery. The historian Ammianus Marcellinus, who saw them and met them, says that they 'surpass in ferocity all that we can conceive of barbarous and ferocious.'* Having passed through the 'gateway of the nations' between the Caspian Sea and the Ural Mountains, in A.D. 374 they fell upon the Ostrogothic kingdom and destroyed it. Of the Ostrogothic people, such as were not slain either passed into servitude to the

* Ammianus adds a detailed description of the Huns (Book XXXI, § 2), which is one of the most vivid passages of ancient literature. It is unfortunately too long to quote here. It recalls the words of the prophet Joel (ii. 2-10) which relate to the same people.

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Huns or else fled westward until finally they found a resting-place in Southern Pannonia (modern S.W. Hungary) within the frontiers of the Empire. The Visigoths next felt the fury of the Mongol attack (A.D. 375). Part of them took refuge in Transylvania, but the majority, cowering in terror on the north bank of the Danube, begged the Roman permission to cross, promising to serve the Empire as colonists and soldiers. On a fateful day (A.D. 376) the Emperor Valens gave them the desired leave, and a great multitude, men, women, and children, made their way over the barrier river, and settled down as a federated nation, under its own leaders and laws, in the much-ravaged province of Moesia (Northern Bulgaria). In two years they rose in revolt, were joined by fresh hordes of their kin, and gave battle to the imperial army under the walls of Adrianople (August 9th, A.D. 378). Then and there was fought one of the decisive battles of world-history. The Romans were defeated with prodigious slaughter, the Emperor Valens himself being among the slain. It was the victory of Germans over Latins; of barbarism over civilisation; of cavalry over infantry. In the history of war it marked the beginning of a millennium during which supreme military power resided in the hands of the horsemen. Not until the days of Courtrai (1302), Bannockburn (1314), and Crécy (1346) did the foot soldier, armed with new weapons,

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break the monopoly of power enjoyed by the mounted warrior.

In A.D. 378 the Danubian frontier of the Roman Empire was finally and irretrievably broken. The Germans were within the sacred limits—the Ostrogoths in Pannonia, the Visigoths in Moesia. We cannot pause to trace in detail their subsequent movements. Suffice it to say that they continued to wander, ravage, and fight until they had brought to an end the rule of Rome in Italy, Southern Gaul, and Spain. The Visigoths were the first to move. Under their king, Alaric, they invaded Italy; sacked Rome itself (A.D. 410); penetrated as far as the Straits of Messina. Then, Alaric being dead, they turned north again, traversed Italy and Southern Gaul, crossed into Spain, and established a kingdom which eventually extended from the River Loire in the north to the Mediterranean in the south. Its capital was Toulouse.

The Ostrogoths, settled in Pannonia, remained quiescent longer. Not till A.D. 473 did they begin seriously to stir. Their passivity was due mainly to the close contiguity of their ancient enemies and oppressors the Huns, from whom they did not obtain deliverance until A.D. 454. On the very day of the battle of Nedao which overthrew the Huns, and restored to the Ostrogoths their freedom of movement, a son was born to King Theudemir, to whom the name of Theodoric was given. As

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soon as he reached manhood he began to lead his warriors on annual raids into Roman territory. For fifteen years (A.D. 473–488) Thrace and Macedonia were devastated by his hordes of bandits. Then the Emperor Zeno, safe behind the walls of Constantinople, but impotent in the field, had a happy idea. Italy, as we shall shortly see, had recently been overrun by Germanic barbarians from the north, who had abolished the Roman rule and set up a king of their own, Odoacer by name. What could be better than to free the Balkan peninsula from Ostrogothic raids by commissioning Theodoric to overthrow Odoacer and to rule Italy as the representative of the Roman Emperor? ~~Theodoric~~ readily accepted the novel rôle; migrated to Italy with all his folk; carried through the programme of conquest with masterly efficiency (assisted by atrocious treachery); and converted Italy into an Ostrogothic kingdom, owing merely the most formal obedience to the distant Byzantine Caesar. Thus by A.D. 493 Italy, like Spain and Southern Gaul, had passed under the control of Germanic barbarians.

Meantime what had been happening further north in the regions so long protected by the Rhine frontier? We have observed how Julian expelled the Franks and Alemans from Gaul in A.D. 355–357, and how, in the very year that saw the disaster of Adrianople (A.D. 378), the Emperor Gratian, colleague of the defeated Valens, completed the restoration of

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the frontier. The security thus re-established did not endure for long. The Danubian defences having finally collapsed, the line of the Rhine could no longer be held. In A.D. 405 the peoples of the West had a presage of the final and imminent catastrophe. A miscellaneous multitude of marauders—Goths, Vandals, Sueves, Alans, etc.—having turned the Rhine defences and assembled in Rhaetia and Noricum (in number variously estimated at from 200,000 to 400,000) under a bandit named Radagaisus,* crossed the Alps and commenced to ravage the rich valleys of the Po and the Arno. They were, however, devoid of organisation or commissariat. Completely out-maneuvred by the brilliant Roman general Stilicho (himself a German of Vandal descent), they were hemmed in among the hills near Florence and starved into surrender. Distributed among the slave markets of Italy, they fetched the equivalent of twelve shillings each.

In A.D. 406 came the deluge. All through the year the hosts of the barbarians—mainly Vandals and Sueves, together with non-Germanic Alans—were assembling in the regions contiguous to the long-broken *Limes Rhaeticus et Germanicus*. On the last day of the year, the Rhine being hard-frozen, they burst across in an overwhelming flood near

* Radagaisus was described by his contemporary Orosius as ‘omnium antiquorum praesentiumque hostium longe immanissimus.’—*Historia contra Paganos*, vii. 37.

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the great city of Mainz. This city they at once stormed and sacked ‘with hideous ruin and combustion.’ Meeting with but little resistance—for the Romans were preoccupied with Alaric and his Visigoths in Illyria and Italy—they continued their career of slaughter and brigandage, plundering and destroying in turn Trèves, Rheims, Tournay, Térouenne, Arras, Amiens, Paris, Orleans, Tours, and Bordeaux. The term ‘Vandalism’ was coined to express the lust of mere destruction for its own sake which characterised this first German devastation of Gaul.

After having for three years laid waste this devoted land so that it no longer yielded a harvest ~~of~~ foot, the host of Vandals, Sueves, and Alans crossed the Pyrenees into Spain, and there continued their work of spoliation. Their booty was enormous; for Spain was the most secluded of all the Roman dioceses. For four centuries it had been virtually free from war, and so peaceful was it that no garrisons whatsoever were needed within its borders. The merciless marauders, therefore, had for several years an easy task. They took possession of the peninsula and its treasures, making them their own. The Vandals settled down in Baetica (Andalusia), the Alans in Lusitania (Portugal), and the Sueves in Galicia (A.D. 411). They were not, however, left for long in undisturbed possession. The Romans, in their desperation, made peace with the Visigoths

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and launched them against the conquerors of the peninsula.* A furious inter-Germanic war followed (A.D. 415-419), as a consequence of which the Alans were practically exterminated, the Sueves driven into the mountains of Asturias, and the Vandals rendered so uncomfortable that in A.D. 429 they welcomed an opportunity to cross to Africa where within ten years they made themselves masters of the Roman province of Africa.

IV

Meantime in Rome herself things were moving to ~~an end~~. After the great disaster of Adrianople (A.D. 378) the place of the defunct Emperor Valens was taken by the extremely capable Theodosius I, a general of Spanish descent, who did much to restore the condition of Roman affairs. For some years before his death in A.D. 395 he was the sole ruler of the Empire. Upon his death, however, his dominions were divided for administrative purposes between his two young sons: the elder, Arcadius, who was to rule the Greek East from Constantinople; the younger, Honorius, who from Ravenna was to govern the Latin West. Both of them, during their minority, were placed under the guardianship of the faithful and capable Stilicho.

* The Visigothic king, Ataulf, successor to Alaric, actually was married in A.D. 414 to Galla Placidia, sister to the Emperor Honorius.

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The Roman Empire from A.D. 395 onward remained in theory a single political unit; but in practice it tended to a schism which became complete in A.D. 476. The East under a succession of capable and crafty Emperors re-established itself: it expelled all its German invaders; it reduced the Christian Church to the condition of a department of State; it made Constantinople impregnable; it reorganised its army, drawing on the hardy mountaineers of Asia Minor; it restored its shattered finances. Hence in A.D. 476 it was equipped for a revived existence destined to continue for nearly a thousand years. On the other hand, the West passed entirely under barbarian control. The ~~armies~~ were recruited almost wholly from Germanic sources, and feuds between partisans of the various conflicting tribes kept Italy, and the West generally, involved in almost chronic civil war. Eleven 'transient and embarrassed phantoms' held the title of Emperor in Italy during the years A.D. 395-476. Most of them were mere nominees of either the Visigoths, who dominated the early part of the period, or the Sueves, who were supreme from A.D. 456 onward.

Finally, in A.D. 476, when the barbarian soldiery claimed one-third of the lands of Italy, and their demand was refused, their leader, Odoacer, deposed the puppet Emperor—Romulus Augustulus by name—and assumed the rule of Italy himself.

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He did not revolt against the Empire: he sent the regalia of the deposed Romulus to Constantinople, acknowledged the Emperor Zeno's authority, and begged for his imperial recognition. This, as we have seen, the Emperor refused, and instead commissioned Theodoric and the Ostrogoths to suppress Odoacer, and rule in his stead. Thus the clever Zeno killed two birds with one stone: he freed the Balkans from the Ostrogothic blight, and he extinguished Odoacer. In this conflict between the two Germans Theodoric had an immense advantage: he was the semi-divine king of a single united people, while Odoacer was a mere military commander whose motley host included Sueves, Burgundians, Herulians, Gepidae, and many others. Odoacer and his host were crushed by A.D. 493, and Italy passed into Ostrogothic hands.

V

Let us survey the situation at the close of the fifth century of the Christian era. First, the Roman Empire, now centred in Constantinople, and re-united under a single head, was renewing its power in all the regions east of the Adriatic. It had completely freed itself in these regions from Germans, and it was no longer menaced by them, although their places beyond the Danube were being taken ominously by Slavs and Asiatic nomads. Secondly,

the Western praefectures of the Empire, although still nominally Roman, had, as a matter of fact, passed wholly into the control of Germanic tribes. Italy was ruled by the Ostrogoths; Africa by the Vandals (who had built a fleet and were ravaging the Mediterranean). In Spain it was as yet uncertain whether Sueves or Visigoths would secure ascendancy. Britain was being gradually conquered by Jutes, Angles, and Saxons.

What of Gaul? That is the region with whose fate we are now most concerned. We must note more particularly what had happened there since in A.D. 406 the Vandals, Sueves, and Alans had rushed the Rhine and begun their work of devastation. We have observed how they themselves, after three years of rapine and slaughter, crossed the Pyrenees to work their will in Spain. Their departure, however, did not ease the situation, for the Romans in Gaul had meantime become involved in a desperate civil war between the Emperor Honorius and a usurper who seduced the British legions and brought them across the Channel to fight his battles in the doomed diocese. In such circumstances the shattered defences of Gaul could not be repaired. The way lay open for the Germanic hordes. The Alemans, unresisted, settled themselves comfortably in the region round Strasburg and Basle. Immediately to the north of them a new Teutonic tribe, the Burgundians, occupied the middle Rhine

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between the Necker and the Main, making Worms their chief seat. Most serious of all, between the Main and the sea, the Franks pressed westward, occupying in particular the valleys of the Moselle and the Meuse.

We have already remarked that the Franks—the first mention of whom under that name occurs in extant literature in connection with the year A.D. 240—consisted of an agglomeration of kindred tribes formed, under extreme pressure, for defence against other Germanic peoples—particularly Saxons and Alemans—and for aggression into Roman Gaul. During the troubles of the fourth century they made considerable encroachments into that part of Roman Gaul which is now known as the Netherlands. Julian in A.D. 355, as we have seen, led his legions against them and crushed them, restoring the frontier. One section of them, however, the so-called Salian Franks, he took into his service and allowed to remain as *foederati* in Toxandria, i.e. the region between the Meuse and the Scheldt. It was a perilous experiment, made probably under stress of necessity. For as Apollinaris Sidonius said of the Franks in the following century, when their qualities had been fully displayed, ‘from their youth up war is their passion.’ Moreover, together with the passion for war, they manifested a quite remarkable capacity for treachery and treaty-breaking.

VI

In A.D. 481, when the famous Clovis became king of the Salian Franks, the frontiers of his tribe had been extended westward as far as the River Somme. Between the Somme and the Loire a Roman fragment, centred in Soissons, still remained; but since there was at that date no longer an Emperor in the West, and since the Roman official at Soissons refused to recognise the authority of the Emperor in Constantinople, the region was commonly called the 'Kingdom of Syagrius.' South of the Loire lay the Visigoths, whose king, seated at Toulouse, now held sway from the south bank of that river to the Strait of Gibraltar. Eastward of the Visigoths the Alemans held Alsace, as well as the old *Agri Decumates*, and to the north of them (engaged in constant conflicts with them) the Ripuarian Franks occupied the valley of the Middle Rhine with Cologne, Trèves, Bonn, and Aix-la-Chapelle as their chief cities. One important change, however, had taken place during the fifth century. The Burgundians were no longer on the Rhine at all. In A.D. 451 their kingdom, centred at Worms, had been obliterated by a sudden incursion of Huns under the terrible Attila 'the scourge of God,' whose depredations were checked only by a coalition of Romans, Franks, and Visigoths in the great battle of the Mauriac Plain, commonly known as the 'Battle

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of Châlons.' When the hurricane was overpassed, the remnant of the Burgundians did not return to their former homes (which the Alemans had occupied), but found a new settlement in the valleys of the Rhône and Saône.

VII

Clovis, within a reign of thirty years (A.D. 481-511), effected the (almost complete) German conquest of Gaul, which Ariovistus had contemplated, but which the Roman power had delayed for five centuries. It is interesting, and indeed important, to note that—such was still the prestige of the Roman name—Clovis, although a perfidious and sanguinary savage, yet acted nominally as a Roman agent and on the Byzantine Emperor's behalf. For the Salian Franks were still in theory Roman *foederati*, and the first person whom they attacked, namely Syagrius, was, equally in theory, a rebel against the Byzantine Emperor's authority. Clovis throughout his nefarious reign remained inordinately proud of his imperial position. So late as A.D. 508 he secured from the Emperor Anastasius the title of 'consul.' He styled himself 'pro-consul' and wore the purple robes of his Roman office.

The conquering career of Clovis can here be merely summarised. To be fully appreciated it needs to be read in detail in the lurid pages of

Gregory of Tours. Suffice it to say that he reduced and annexed the 'Kingdom of Syagrius' (A.D. 486); that he crushed and expelled the Alemans in two tremendous wars (A.D. 496 and 505-507); that he drove the Visigoths wholly out of Gaul, save for the narrow strip of Mediterranean coast known as Septimania, thus acquiring the vast region between the Loire and the Pyrenees; and that, finally, shortly before his death, by a complicated process of double-dealing and assassination, he established his authority over Ripuarian as well as Salian Franks. Gregory of Tours, having duly recorded the list of Clovis's perfidies and atrocities, makes the remark, strange for even a sixth-century bishop: 'Thus day by day God brought low his enemies before him, so that they submitted to him, and increased his Kingdom, because he walked before Him with an upright heart and did that which was pleasing in His sight.'

The ground for Gregory's amazing eulogy was that Clovis in A.D. 496 had professed conversion from Paganism to Catholic Christianity.* In this politic move Clovis displayed high statesmanly wisdom. The Frankish conquerors of Gaul were singularly few in numbers compared with the multitudes of the peoples whom they subdued. Clovis realised

* Clovis was at this time the only Catholic king in existence! The other Barbarian monarchs were either Pagan or Arian; the Byzantine Emperor was a Monophysite heretic.

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that it would be a gigantic, if not impossible, task to hold the country permanently by force. He therefore made it his policy from the first to conciliate the conquered and seek fusion with them. He refrained from destruction and spoliation; he did not even divide the land among his followers. Above all, he sought the friendship of the Church and won the bishops over to his side. Having been baptized in A.D. 496, he had the invaluable aid of the Catholic priesthood on his side when he waged war upon the heretical Visigoths and Burgundians.

In attacking the Burgundians, however, Clovis met with his one considerable failure (A.D. 500). It was left to his sons to annex Burgundy in A.D. 534, and to round off the Frankish kingdom in Gaul by acquiring Provence from the Ostrogoths in A.D. 536.

VIII

While Roman Gaul was thus being completely Germanised, the sons of Clovis turned their armies eastward against the other peoples of Germany. In A.D. 531 they reduced Southern Thuringia, and in 543 Bavaria. Thus when the last of them, Clothar I, died in A.D. 561, the Frankish realm stretched from the Elbe in the east to the Atlantic in the west; from the Channel in the north to the Pyrenees in the south.

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It would be beside our purpose to trace in detail the complicated history of this German kingdom. It is a tragic record of fratricidal conflict and bestial vice. If anyone wishes to plumb the depths of human ferocity and depravity, he may be advised to study the story of the mortal feud that raged between the two sons of Clothar I, Sigebert and Chilperic, and between their respective wives Brunhilda and Fredegonda.* It ended only when Brunhilda, the last survivor of the brawl, then over eighty years of age, was captured by Chilperic's son, subjected to excruciating tortures for three days, and finally torn to pieces by wild horses (A.D. 613). What we have to note is this: that the Frankish realm never became a unit. It was divided into two incompatible parts by the old Roman frontier of the Rhineland. To the west lay the once-civilised region of Gaul, to which the names of 'Neustria' and later 'France' were given. To the east lay the lands of the barbarians, called at first 'Austrasia,' but finally simply 'Germany.' In 'Neustria' the Romano-Celtic population was numerically overwhelmingly preponderant. The Frankish war-lords were a mere military aristocracy, holding sway over a subject multitude. The Christian religion prevailed; the Church dominated

* Readers to whom the Chronicles of the Franks are not accessible will find a brilliant summary of this conflict in Michelet's *Histoire de France*, vol. i. pp. 172-196.

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both politics and society ; the Latin language (though much debased) triumphed over the German tongue ; the Frankish conquerors were in time absorbed and incorporated. Roman Gaul came into its own again disguised as ‘France.’ In ‘Austrasia,’ on the other hand, barbarism and paganism remained long in the ascendant. Not until the eighth century, when St Boniface and other missionaries from England and Ireland took up the work of evangelisation and civilisation, did Christianity modify the manners of large tracts of this benighted region. So late as the fourteenth century the Germans retained their bad reputation for savagery. Says the great chronicler, Froissart : ‘They are covetous people above all other, and they have no pity if they have the upper hand, and are hard and evil handlers of their prisoners.’

IX

The descendants of Clovis—the so-called Merovingian kings of the Franks—became utterly degenerate and ineffective. Hence in A.D. 751 they were superseded by a new line—the so-called Carolingians—whose most eminent member was Charles the Great, popularly known as Charlemagne, who reigned A.D. 768–814. This remarkable man, the central figure of the Middle Age, was a German through and through. He displayed *in excelsis* the

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Frankish passion for war, the general Teutonic lust for conquest, the combined perfidy and ferocity of his race. All the same, he was touched by the civility of Rome; to some extent tamed by the Christian religion, which he professed even when he ignored its precepts; and refined by the culture of the ancient world in so far as it still survived in cathedral schools and monastic cloisters.

Having established his authority over the whole of Frankland, he began his predatory career by invading and conquering Northern Italy (A.D. 773–774). He then turned upon those immemorial enemies of the Franks, namely, the Saxons, who still occupied in pagan independence the valleys of the Ems, the Weser, and the Lower Elbe—an awkward enclave in the Carolingian kingdom. The struggle with the Saxons was terrific. It extended over thirty years (A.D. 775–805) and it was marked by appalling atrocities. For it was a struggle on the Saxons' part not only for freedom but also for the cause of their tribal gods, Woden and Company. Each Frankish conquest was marked by the compulsory baptism of captives, and the founding of bishoprics. Each interval of war witnessed the repudiation of Christianity by the Saxons and the destruction of the churches. These lapses were followed by the return of the Franks, the reduction of the Saxons, and the massacre of the lapsed: in A.D. 782 no fewer than 4500 prisoners

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were slain in one operation at Verden. This strange and lamentable combination of religion and war, this dissemination of the faith by means of the sword, may be regarded as Charlemagne's peculiar contribution to the spread of Christianity. He was the first of the Crusaders, following all too faithfully the example of Mohammed rather than the precepts of Christ. The third of his conquests was, indeed, won from the Mohammedans themselves: it was the Spanish Mark (the region between the Pyrenees and the River Ebro) which had fallen into the hands of the infidel early in the eighth century. Not till A.D. 812 was the conquest complete.

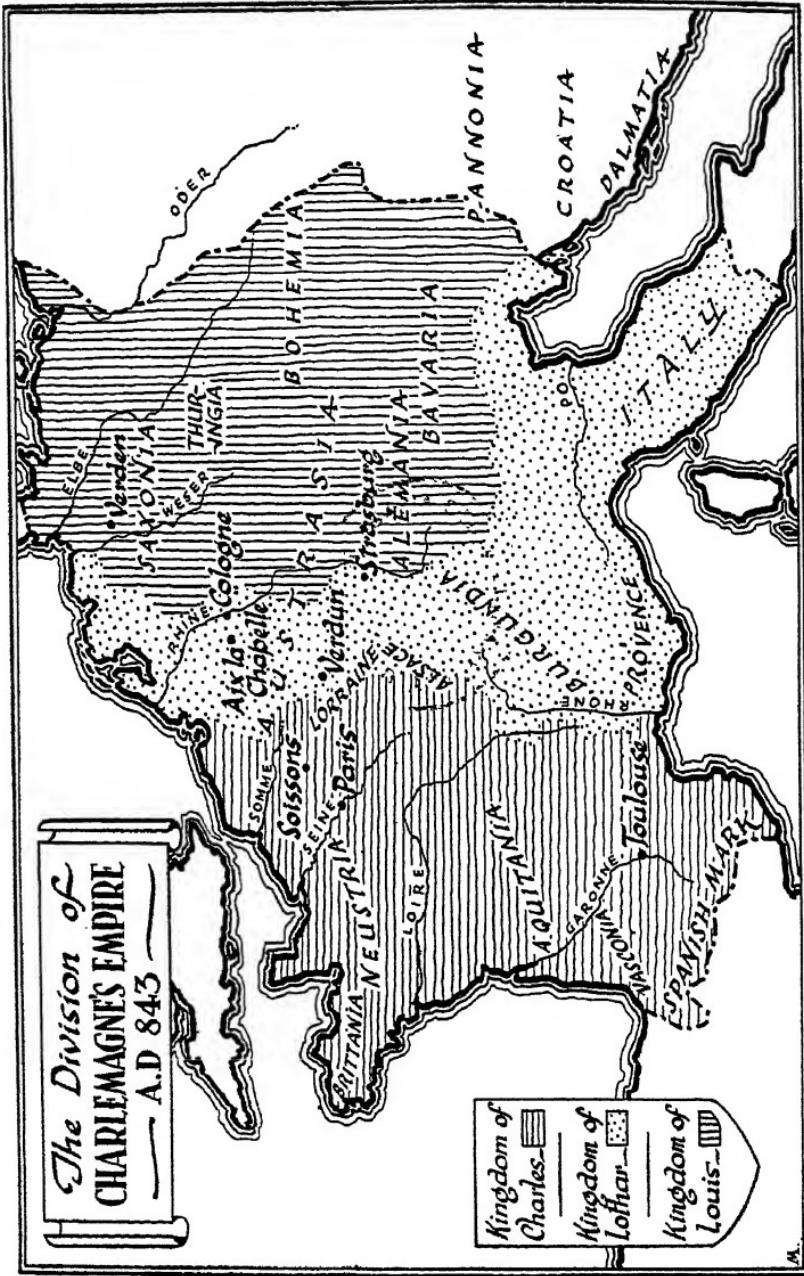
Charlemagne's most conspicuous aggressions, however, were directed against his non-Germanic neighbours on his eastern frontiers. He reduced and made tributary, although he did not incorporate them in his realm, the Avars of Pannonia (A.D. 788-796); the Slavs between the Elbe and the Oder (A.D. 789); the Czechs of Bohemia (A.D. 790); the Slovenians of Croatia and Dalmatia (A.D. 800). He was, indeed, incessantly at aggressive war. His warriors expected him to be so. Every year, in the early spring, he assembled his host, not to decide whether or not to go to war, but merely to settle whom to attack. A campaign was a fixed annual event; sometimes two campaigns were squeezed into the season, and altogether Charlemagne waged some fifty wars.

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He typified, moreover, not only the extreme bellicosity of the Germans but also their imperial ambitions. He got himself crowned as 'Roman Emperor,' and under that fictitious title he claimed jurisdiction over the *Orbis Terrarum*, that is to say, over all the vast dominions that had once acknowledged the authority of the Western Caesars. Rarely, however, has an effort to attain *Weltmacht* led to a more disastrous *Niedergang*. Charlemagne himself, it is true, in spite of the dissipation of his energies, completed his reign without catastrophe. But his weaker successors, in snatching at the bauble of universal dominion, lost the substantial reality of the German kingship. In particular their vain struggles to maintain themselves in Italy, and seat themselves at Rome, brought them into such violent conflict with fulminating popes, patriotic princes, and independent city-states, that their power was broken and they were reduced to impotence even in Frankland itself.

Frankland, moreover, became disintegrated soon after Charlemagne's death. Its two disparate parts, 'Neustria' and 'Austrasia,' were with difficulty kept together under the rule of Charles's feeble son, Lewis the Pious (A.D. 814-840). His demise was followed by a ferocious civil war between his three heirs, Lothar, Lewis, and Charles. The struggle was terminated by a famous tripartite settlement, the Treaty of Verdun (A.D. 843). Lewis kept the

*The Division of
CHARLEMAGNE'S EMPIRE
— A.D 843*



Kingdom of
Charles

Kingdom of
Lothair

Kingdom of
Louis

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bulk of Austrasia, together with Bavaria, etc., henceforth called 'Germany'; Charles received the bulk of Neustria, together with Aquitaine, Western Burgundy, etc., henceforth called 'France.' Between the two a curious Middle Kingdom (with the title of Emperor) was created for Lothar; it consisted of the Netherlands, Alsace-Lorraine, Eastern Burgundy, and Northern Italy. From that time onward for more than a thousand years the section of that Middle Kingdom lying north of the Alps has been an almost constant source of contention between 'France,' which claimed it as part of Roman Gaul, and 'Germany,' which claimed it as a necessary appendix of her Empire.

CHAPTER III

LATER MEDIAEVAL WARS

I

THE great partition of Verdun, which marked the permanent separation of ‘Germany’ from ‘France,’ almost exactly synchronised with one of the most formidable of all the Germanic aggressions upon civilised and Christian Europe, namely, the Viking incursions. The Vikings, however, were not wholly Germanic. There were three main bodies of them—the Danes, the Swedes, the Norsemen. The first were almost purely Germanic, closely akin to their neighbours the Saxons, and worshipping the same gods; the Swedes and the Norsemen both contained admixtures of older Scandinavian races akin to the Lapps and the Finns.

What caused these northern peoples to break out in predatory raids during the period of Charlemagne’s reign still remains a mystery. From time immemorial they had continued quiescent, leading their secluded lives within the borders of their remote and inhospitable shores. Some think that over-population was the cause: but of this there is no convincing evidence. Others consider that the growth of royal

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power drove the freedom-loving nobility to seek life and liberty on the seas. Others again stress the importance of the conquest of Frisia by the Franks (A.D. 734-785); for the Frisians had been great seamen, and the destruction of their naval power left the North Sea open to miscellaneous piracy. But of all the many possible causes the one that seems most probable and prominent is the cause of religion. The Vikings were worshippers of Odin and Thor. Their main fury fell upon monasteries and churches. The chronicles that record their raids commonly speak of them as 'the pagan host.' Their incursions thus constitute the last pagan attack upon Christianity, as well as the last barbarian assault upon the Roman Empire. From the religious point of view, the immediate incitement to their assault was Charlemagne's sanguinary conquest and conversion of the Saxons. Such of the Saxons as were resolved to avoid subjugation and compulsory baptism fled across the River Eider into Denmark and stirred up their co-religionists to berserk fury.

The Frankish realm of Charlemagne and his successors, of course, had to meet the first impact of the new invaders. Charlemagne himself had to drive them back across the Eider (A.D. 808) and, later, to clear them out of Frisia; but it was not until after the partition of A.D. 843 that their worst depredations took place. The Middle Kingdom (Lotharingia) suffered most; within forty years of the

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Treaty of Verdun, its capital (Aachen) and nearly all its other cities were sacked. ‘France’ too was repeatedly harried, and finally (A.D. 911) the Northmen had to be allowed to take permanent possession of the region still called after them ‘Normandy.’ The eastern division of Frankland, i.e. ‘Germany,’ came off best. Its resistance was the strongest. Indeed, a great victory over the Danes gained by the last Carolingian king, Arnulf, in A.D. 891 may be said to have marked the end of the Viking peril in that region.

II

The fact that Germany at the end of the ninth century finally defeated and expelled her Viking invaders, while France and Lotharingia continued to be harried by them, explains how it came to pass that in the tenth century Germany took the lead among the European nations. The Carolingian line of kings having become extinct, she found a new and vigorous succession of rulers in the dukes of Saxony, beginning with the famous Henry the Fowler (A.D. 919–936), and continuing for just over one hundred years (to A.D. 1024). The Saxons—only recently conquered and forcibly evangelised by Charlemagne—were the least Roman and Christian, the most warlike and Teutonic, of all the German tribes. Their ferocious Duke was elected king because Germany, although delivered from the Vikings, was

menaced by the pressure of the Slavs from beyond the Elbe, and still more by the advance of the Magyars up the Oder and the Danube. Henry's main task was the defence of his frontiers. He drove back the Slavs; he inflicted a heavy defeat upon the Magyars (A.D. 933); he organised a new body of cavalry; he built 'burhs' or fortified towns in threatened regions; above all, he inaugurated the 'Mark' System. The 'Mark' was a military county, usually a district recently captured from an enemy, organised for the defence of the frontier, and for a base of aggressive operations when occasion offered. The first 'Mark' to be established was that of Brandenburg, the nucleus of which was Brennibor, captured from the Slavonic Havelli in A.D. 928.

Henry's son, Otto I (A.D. 936–973), continued his father's work. He completed the Mark System on his north-eastern frontier, and, having decisively beaten the Magyars at Lechfeld in Bavaria (A.D. 955), he created a new East Mark—Ostmark or Austria—with Vienna as its main fortress, to block the way of the Danube to the marauders.

Otto, however, was much more concerned with the internal organisation of Germany than the Fowler had been. He was not content with the merely feudal suzerainty over the dukes of Bavaria, Franconia, Swabia, and Lotharingia, which had satisfied his father. He wanted to centralise the government and strengthen the monarchy. In order to accom-

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plish his purpose he adopted two main expedients: first, by means of forfeitures and marriages he absorbed the duchies into the royal family; secondly, he made a close alliance with the Church, employing bishops extensively as civil administrators. This alliance with the Church took him much further than he had intended. It took him to Italy, where the Papacy was in urgent need of reformation. Three journeys to Rome he made, on the second of which he was crowned 'Holy Roman Emperor' by the Pope (A.D. 962).

Thus once again, as under Charlemagne, did the German king secure claims over the land of the Caesars and begin to divert his energies from the government of his own country to the conquest of another. This diversion ultimately proved to be the ruin of both Germany and Italy. Otto II (A.D. 973-983), who married a Byzantine princess, became wholly engrossed in efforts to secure her South Italian marriage-portion. He perished in a Calabrian ambush at the age of twenty-eight. His infant successor, Otto III (A.D. 983-1002), when he grew up, utterly neglected Germany; took up his abode in Rome; died in Sicily. The German crown then passed to a distant cousin, Henry of Bavaria, who tried to restore the kingship (A.D. 1002-24). But it was too late. The tribal magnates had become virtually independent potentates.

III

With the death of Henry II the Saxon line became extinct. A keen contest for the kingship among the dukes resulted in the election of Conrad of Swabia (A.D. 1024-39), who became the founder of what is usually called the Salian line, whose four successive chiefs held the royal office until A.D. 1125. Most unfortunately for Germany, the royal office was by this time inextricably bound up with the fictitious office of 'Holy Roman Emperor,' so that all the Salian kings went to Italy to be crowned and became fatally implicated in Italian politics.

In theory the 'Holy Roman Empire' was sublime. It was the secular counterpart of the 'Holy Catholic Church,' and as such claimed jurisdiction over all Christian men everywhere. In practice it meant neglect by the German king of the duty of governing Germany in order to pursue visionary schemes of Italian conquest and world dominion. More serious still, the difficulty of defining the spheres of jurisdiction between Pope and Emperor led to acute conflict between the two—e.g. the so-called Investiture Controversy, which very gravely weakened the authority of both the combatants. When Henry V—the last of the Salians, husband of Matilda of England—died in A.D. 1125, both Germany and Italy were torn into fragments.

While the great Investiture Conflict between the

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Empire and the Papacy was going on, United Christendom embarked on an enterprise which demanded the concentration of all its forces—an enterprise inspired by Popes Gregory VII and Urban II, of which the Emperor in normal circumstances would have been *ex officio* the natural leader—the Crusades. The object of the Crusades was, of course, to rescue the holy places in Palestine from the infidel Seljuks, into whose hands they had fallen in A.D. 1075. It was impossible for the excommunicated and scandalous Salian, Henry IV, to have any part or lot in the sacred undertaking. So in the first crusade (A.D. 1096–1100) Germany had practically no share. Very different, however, was it with the second and third crusades.

By the time of the second crusade (A.D. 1147–49) the German kingship had passed, after a contested election and a protracted civil war, into the possession of Conrad III of the Swabian House of Hohenstaufen. Stirred by the passionate eloquence of St Bernard of Clairvaux, he collected a German army and led it through Hungary, Thrace, and Asia Minor into Syria. Neither he, however, nor his colleague, Louis VII of France, who conducted a separate expedition, was able to accomplish anything in face of Moslem hostility and Byzantine unfriendliness. Conrad's successor, his nephew Frederick Barbarossa (A.D. 1152–90), was the pioneer of the third crusade. He, too, led an army into Asia Minor, but beyond

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Asia Minor he never got. He was drowned as he attempted to cross the River Salef.

IV

At the time of his death, Frederick Barbarossa, one of the greatest of mediaeval monarchs, had reigned over Germany for thirty-eight years. He had also been crowned King of Lombardy at Pavia and Emperor at Rome (A.D. 1154). He took his Lombard and imperial titles very seriously. They gave an appearance of right to a whole series of aggressive wars designed for the conquest of Italy and the reduction of the Papacy. Five times, at the head of German hosts, did Frederick cross the Alps and wage war against the resistant Lombard cities, who were supported by the Popes, the French, and the English. After causing frightful havoc, he was finally defeated in the great battle of Legnano (A.D. 1176), compelled to make abject submission to the implacable Pope Alexander III (A.D. 1177), and to abandon his claims over the Lombard cities (Treaty of Constance, A.D. 1183).

One of the causes why Barbarossa was unable to subdue the Italian cities was that he was inadequately supported by Germany. A strong body of opinion in Germany, voiced particularly by the powerful duke, Henry the Lion of Saxony (son-in-law of Henry II of England), contended that the proper

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sphere for German conquest and expansion was not southward beyond the Alps in the civilised lands of the Mediterranean, but eastward beyond the Oder and the Vistula in the still pagan lands of the Slavs and Letts. Hence many great German feudatories refused to accompany Frederick on his Italian expeditions, and devoted themselves to aggressive wars, sanctified by the name of 'crusades,' in the lands round the shores of the Baltic. Their holy and not unprofitable excursions attracted the adventurous from many lands, and it became a fashionable form of military apprenticeship to go crusading in the Baltic lands. It will be remembered that Chaucer says of his perfect, gentle knight that

Ful often time he had the bord begonne
Aboven allé nations in Pruce :
In Lettowe had he reyzed and in Ruce.

In other words, he had joined the Germans in their raids upon Prussia, Lithuania, and Russia. Among the Englishmen who followed the example of the knight, the most eminent was Henry of Lancaster, who afterwards became King Henry IV.

A notable stage in this Germanisation of the Baltic lands was marked when permanent settlements began to be made upon the coasts. In A.D. 1205 a military religious order, commonly known as the 'Knights of the Sword,' received recognition from Pope Innocent III. Service against the pagans of Livonia

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was to win the same exemptions from penance and purgatory as service against the infidels of the Holy Land. The Knights established themselves at Riga, which became an important base for German conquest, commerce, and colonisation. After rather more than a quarter of a century of isolated effort, the 'Knights of the Sword' amalgamated themselves with a much larger and more powerful organisation which made its appearance on the shores of the Baltic in A.D. 1231. This was the famous crusading order of Teutonic Knights, originally 'of the Hospital of the Blessed Virgin at Jerusalem.'

This order of Teutonic Knights arose early in the twelfth century (*c.* A.D. 1128) as a hospital in Jerusalem for the care of German crusaders. The fall of Jerusalem caused it to move its headquarters to Acre, where it became primarily a fighting body (*c.* A.D. 1190). The failure of the third and fourth crusades in the Holy Land caused the Knights to look elsewhere for a sphere of missionary enterprise. Hence they welcomed an invitation from the Christian Duke of Poland to come to his assistance in evangelising (and incidentally annexing) heathen Prussia. The Duke soon had cause to regret his invitation; for what the Knights captured they kept. In rapid succession they established themselves at Thorn, Kulm, and Marienwerder, all on the Vistula. Later on Königsberg became their headquarters. Within half a century of their first advent they had secured pos-

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session of all the country between the Vistula and the Memel, that is, East Prussia, Courland, Western Livonia, and Samogitia. Their rule of the conquered territories was harsh : they prohibited the use of native languages, making German compulsory ; they excluded the natives from commerce and the professions ; they refused to permit any Jew to settle within their jurisdiction.

Success and growing wealth brought rapid degeneration to the Teutonic Order. In A.D. 1308 the Archbishop of Riga appealed to Pope Clement V for its total suppression on the ground of the luxury, sensuality, cruelty, and injustice of its members. The appeal was rejected, but it was not forgotten. Soon the charges of tyranny and vice brought against the Knights were supplemented by the charges, still graver in those days, of heresy and the practice of the black arts. Hence, once again, the Council of Constance (A.D. 1415) demanded peremptorily the total suppression of the Order.

By that time, however, the work of judgment and execution had been taken up by sterner and stronger hands than those of wrangling ecclesiastics. Poland, now a kingdom, united to Lithuania, and governed by the powerful monarch, Ladislas V of the House of Jagello, had long watched with growing impatience and disgust the misrule of these alien aggressors. Hence in A.D. 1410, collecting a great army of Poles, Lithuanians, Russians, and Tartars,

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he broke their power in the decisive battle of Tannenberg. During the succeeding century they gradually were deprived of piece after piece of their conquests until at the time of the Reformation (of which more anon) little save East Prussia was left.

V

Another potent agent of German aggression in these Baltic regions during the later Middle Age was the Hanseatic League. The connection between the League and the Teutonic Order was, indeed, close, since the towns of Königsberg, Thorn, Danzig, and Elburg belonged to both institutions, the one economic, the other political and ecclesiastical.

The League rose to prominence in the thirteenth century as an alliance of German cities for aggressive commerce and, if necessary, defensive war. The two most important of its members—which ultimately numbered some eighty—were Lübeck and Hamburg, the road between which (linking the Baltic and the North Sea) had an importance akin to that of the Kiel Canal at the present day. By planting its fortified Hanses round the shores of the Baltic and the North Sea, and by filling them with armed men, the League acquired a powerful political as well as commercial influence throughout Northern Europe. Wisby in Swedish Gothland; Novgorod in Russia; Bergen in Norway; Bruges in the

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Netherlands ; the Steelyard in London (on the site of the present Cannon Street railway station), became centres of Germanic influence.*

The fourteenth century was the period of the League's greatest power. Long before the close of that century, however, its activities had begun to arouse keen resentment and hostility in the lands wherein it had secured trading stations. Its political intrigues ; its truculent behaviour ; its extortionate demands ; its exclusive trade regulations ; its general unneighbourliness, excited universal hostility. Its death-knell was struck when, by the Union of Kalmar (A.D. 1397), Norway, Sweden, and Denmark became united as a single monarchy. Both the Baltic and the North Sea passed out of the League's control. Its decline was further accelerated by internal dissensions (e.g. Baltic towns versus North Sea towns) ; by the opening of new trade routes owing to the geographical discoveries of the fifteenth century ; and by the mysterious evacuation of the Baltic by the herring !

VI

While Teutonic Knights and Hanseatic Merchants were imposing German *Kultur* upon the unfortunate peoples of the Baltic littoral, the German kings, in

* A vivid picture of the subversive activities of the Hansards of the London Steelyard is given in Ian D. Colvin's *Germans in England* (1915).

their capacity of ‘Holy Roman Emperors,’ were pressing their claims on Italy, and carrying fire and sword into that unhappy land.

Frederick Barbarossa, three years after the humiliating Peace of Constance, and four years before his death in Asia Minor, had achieved a diplomatic victory of the first magnitude. It consisted in the marriage of his son and heir Henry to the heiress of the Norman kingdom of Sicily (including Southern Italy) at Milan in January 1186. When, therefore, in 1190 Henry succeeded his father as German king and Roman Emperor, he also, in right of his wife, claimed control of Southern Italy and Sicily. He had to fight to make his claim good; but he ultimately succeeded (1194-95). Then he had both the Papacy and the Lombard cities in a vice. Liable to simultaneous attack by Germans from the north and by a miscellaneous host of Germans, Greeks, Normans, and Saracens from the south, they seemed doomed to subjugation. For Henry had large dreams of empire. He even conceived the possibility of conquering Byzantium and reuniting East and West as under Constantine the Great.

The immediate peril of the Popes and the cities was removed by Henry’s sudden death at Messina in A.D. 1197: he was only thirty-two years old. He left an infant son, Frederick, born in 1194. The widowed Empress, Constance, acted as regent until her death in 1198. She bequeathed the guardianship

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of the kingdom and the youthful prince (now king of Sicily) to the newly enthroned Pope Innocent III, most imperial of all the long line of Roman pontiffs. It was an amazing appointment, due to dire necessity. For of all the persons in the world the Pope was the one who had most cause to fear the union on one head of the German and Sicilian crowns. He took care, in fact, as soon as Frederick grew to years of semi-intelligence to extort from him a solemn oath that never in any circumstances would he accept the rule of both kingdoms.

He ruled in Sicily by hereditary right ; it remained throughout his life his favourite place of residence ; it always retained his main interest, and before he died he effected so remarkable a transformation of its government and institutions as to make it in fact the first of Modern States. His subjects there were a mixed lot—Hebrews, Latins, Greeks, Normans, Saracens. Four great religions—Jewish, Catholic, Orthodox, Mohammedan—were equally represented. He tolerated them all, somewhat contemptuously ; for he himself was an avowed unbeliever, openly proclaiming his opinion that Moses, Christ, and Mohammed were all impostors. He established the complete ascendancy of politics over religion, the State over the Church. He founded a strong centralised bureaucracy. He built schools and universities, and encouraged secular education, especially the study of science and medicine. He adopted an

oriental mode of life, maintaining a harem like any Eastern sultan. He was, indeed, *Stupor Mundi*, the Wonder of the World, the first modern man.

With Germany he had nothing to do until he was seventeen years old. That unhappy country was meantime torn by civil war between two rival candidates for the kingship, namely, Philip of Swabia (brother of the deceased Henry VI) and Otto of Brunswick (son of Henry the Lion of Saxony, and grandson of Henry II of England). Pope Innocent III intervened emphatically in this conflict. At first he strongly supported Otto, and rejoiced when (Philip having been assassinated in 1208) he was generally recognised as Emperor. Otto's imperial pretensions, however, soon clashed with Innocent's claims to universal dominion, and in 1210 Otto joined his uncle, King John of England, in the ranks of the excommunicated. Next year, since Otto proved obstinate, Innocent played his trump card: he brought forward his young Sicilian ward and secured his election as 'King of the Romans,' that is Emperor designate.*

Frederick left Sicily and travelled to Rome, where he met the great Pope for the first and last time. Having done homage and taken a number of solemn vows (all of which he subsequently broke), he left Rome, well furnished with papal money, and pro-

* Innocent's action in allying himself with a Hohenstaufen in Germany has many analogies with Hitler's alliance with the Bolsheviks in 1939. It marked a complete abandonment of principle, and it was a fatal error of policy.

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ceeded to Germany, where for three years he and his ‘Ghibelline’ partisans waged war upon the ‘Guelf’ Otto and his supporters. Since chief among Otto’s supporters was his uncle, John of England, Frederick had no difficulty in enlisting the aid of Philip Augustus of France. The issue was finally decided at Bouvines (A.D. 1214), where the forces of Otto and John were utterly defeated. Otto made his submission to Frederick, but was allowed to retain the imperial title till his death next year. From A.D. 1215, then, Frederick’s reign as Emperor is dated.

VII

The great Pope, Innocent III, did not long survive the triumph of his ward—which was the real defeat of the papal cause. He died in A.D. 1216 at an age (fifty-five years) earlier than that at which most popes are elected. He was succeeded, indeed, by a man far older than himself, the mild and conciliatory Honorius III. This pope had at one time been tutor in Sicily to the young Frederick, and he was eminently well disposed towards him. Nevertheless, he had much trouble with him because of his violated vows, his blasphemous utterances, and his oriental behaviour. Under the successors of Honorius, namely Gregory IX (A.D. 1227–41)* and Innocent IV (A.D.

* Gregory IX, a kinsman of Innocent III, was eighty years old at the date of his election, and ninety-four at the time of his death. His vigour was amazing.

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1243–52), disapproval developed into open war, and a life-or-death struggle developed between the Empire and the Papacy. Into the causes and the course of that epoch-making struggle we are not called upon to enter. It is enough for us to observe that it involved the ruin of both the combatants, and of both the countries (Germany and Italy) with which they were peculiarly identified. The Papacy, on the one hand, prostituted all its spiritual powers to political ends. As Mr A. L. Smith well says :

The revenues and offices of the Church, its disciplinary and penitential system, its highest ideals of the Cross, its lowest pecuniary motives, its very sacraments, were forged into weapons. Heaven itself and Hell were converted into sinews of war. From this prostitution Papal policy was never hereafter to shake itself free.*

As to Italy, it was devastated from end to end by the insensate fury of the strife of Guelf (the Papal party) and Ghibellines (the Imperial party). For Frederick and his supporters, on the other hand, were merciless in their ferocity.† As to Germany, it suffered from something much worse than neglect. Frederick showed no interest in it at all. He left it to be governed by regents, and he used its resources,

* A. L. Smith, *Church and State in the Middle Ages* (1913), pp. 228 and 233.

† For examples of Frederick's sanguinary savagery, see E. Kantorowicz's *Frederick the Second* (English translation, 1931), especially pp. 129, 556, 625, 634, 651, 654, 657.

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including his rights as King and Emperor, merely to purchase adherents in his anti-papal campaign. For instance, by the Statute of Worms (A.D. 1231) he granted to the territorial lords virtual sovereignty in their dominions. He allowed the royal power to vanish almost completely away.

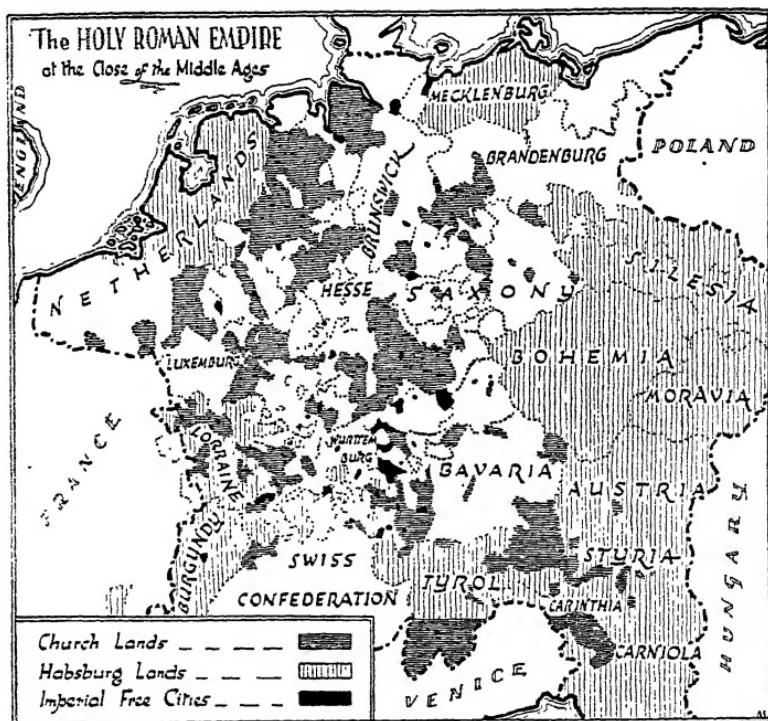
Frederick himself perished in the midst of the unholy brawl, leaving the issue still undecided (A.D. 1250). But Innocent IV was not content to be left merely in possession of the field. He resolved to wage a war of extermination against the whole of the Hohenstaufen brood. Hence, refusing to recognise Frederick's sons, Conrad (1250-54) and Manfred (1254-66), or his grandson, Conradin (1266-68), he, as feudal overlord of Sicily, offered the Sicilian crown to such as he thought were rich enough, strong enough, and silly enough, to fight for it. Richard of Cornwall, brother of Henry III, declined it (1250 and again 1252); Henry III himself accepted it on behalf of his son Edmund, and ruined himself in his efforts to finance the papal forces that strove in vain to conquer it (1254-55). Finally, after a long interval, Charles of Anjou, brother of Louis IX of France, took it over and secured it. Manfred was defeated and slain at Grandella in 1266; Conradien was crushed and captured at Tagliacozza two years later. No mercy was shown to him. Boy though he was—only sixteen years old—he was condemned to death, and executed at Naples, as from a lofty

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scaffold he gazed with wistful eyes over its matchless bay.

VIII

While the Popes and the Hohenstaufen fought like infuriated fiends for possession of Sicily, Germany



lapsed into a condition of sheer anarchy. There was no semblance of central government. Foreign phantoms—William of Holland (1254–56), Richard of Cornwall (1257–72)—from time to time consented

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to receive the visionary kingship, giving in return for the brief enjoyment of the empty title of imperial majesty the stores of their wealth and the surrender of such few royal prerogatives as still remained.

Finally, in A.D. 1273, when the kingdom and the empire had been vacant for a year, Pope Gregory X intervened. Amid the German chaos his revenues from Germany were vanishing. So he informed the electors that unless they met and appointed a resident king, and that not a mere figurehead but one capable of restoring order, he himself would act out of his *plenitudo potestatis* and would give them a ruler. Thus encouraged, they deliberated. To whom should they offer the imperial crown, which in theory was open—as was the Papacy—to every freeborn Christian man? Since the crown had been shorn of all its possessions and most of its prerogatives, it was necessary to find someone willing to accept it who had independent sources of revenue and power.

The person ultimately discovered was Rudolf, Count of Hapsburg, the owner and ruler of considerable territories in the now disintegrated and derelict Duchy of Swabia. He accepted the German kingship and the title of Emperor mainly in order that he might aggrandise his family (1) by restoring and recovering the Swabian Duchy, and (2) by acquiring such other principalities as might be secured through the marriages of his many children

and the forfeitures of his still more numerous enemies. Within the twenty years of his reign he managed by careful attention to business to collect within the Hapsburg circle the invaluable fiefs of Austria, Styria, Carinthia, and Carniola. So formidable indeed had the Hapsburg power become by A.D. 1292 that the electors declined to pass on the crown to his son, Albert, who secured it only after six years of civil war. His reign was brief (A.D. 1298-1308), for at the end of ten years he was murdered. This short period, however, sufficed to enable him to secure the throne of Bohemia for his brother-in-law, Henry of Carinthia.

In A.D. 1308 the electors, once more rejecting the Hapsburg candidate, chose the head of a rival house, namely, Henry of Luxemburg (A.D. 1308-13). He, too, took up the policy of family aggrandisement and succeeded in transferring the Bohemian crown from Henry of Carinthia to his own son John, who was destined to die on the battlefield of Crécy, fighting against Edward III of England, thirty-six years later.

The most notable of four Luxemburg Emperors was Charles IV, son of the Bohemian king, John (A.D. 1346-78). He ruled Germany from Prague, which he greatly adorned and glorified. His main territorial aim was to link up his Luxemburg Duchy with his Bohemian kingdom, and towards this end he succeeded in securing the Duchy of Brabant and

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the Margravate of Brandenburg. He is more especially famous, however, for his effort to reform and stabilise the constitution of the Empire by means of the ‘Golden Bull’ of A.D. 1356. This fixed the Electoral College, and determined the mode of election in such a manner as to make the imperial office (so Charles hoped) virtually hereditary in the Luxemburg family. His scheme, however, was wrecked after his death by the sanguinary quarrels of his three sons, and by the hopeless inebriation of the eldest, Wenzel (the ‘good King Wenceslas’ of the well-known carol). Hence, in A.D. 1438, the Hapsburgs came back again, and from that date retained the crown of the Holy Roman Empire—in the male line till A.D. 1740, and in the female line from A.D. 1744 until the extinction of that Empire in 1806.

In the fifteenth century, however, the imperial crown conferred little or no real authority. Sovereign power resided in some 360 local rulers headed by the seven electors. Beneath these in rank were virtually independent dukes, margraves, counts, barons, and numerous free cities. Further, there were some 1500 imperial knights—the *Ritterschaft*—who owed no allegiance to anyone except the *fainéant* Emperor. This anarchic crowd, proud, lawless, poverty-stricken, was little better than an unorganised gang of murderous bandits. Thus at the very time when England, France, and Spain were

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becoming strong national states with vigorous monarchs at their head, Germany was sinking back into chaos. The last of the mediaeval successors of Charlemagne, the Hapsburg Frederick III (A.D. 1440-1493), lived obscurely in a country house near Vienna growing vegetables, feeding birds, playing with jewels, and dabbling in astrology. He neither exercised, nor attempted to exercise, any influence upon the course of the tremendous events that were transpiring in his time—the fall of Constantinople, the discovery of America, the Renaissance, the pre-Reformation.

CHAPTER IV

THE THIRTY YEARS WAR

I

GERMANY at the end of the Middle Age was utterly disintegrated. It consisted, as we have just remarked, of 360 separate and virtually independent states—duke-domes, margravates, counties, bishoprics, abbacies, free cities, and so on—not to mention the hundreds of lawless and masterless ‘imperial knights’ (*the Ritterschaft*), a disorderly crowd, little better than bandits, all of whom owed no more than a nominal allegiance to the lethargic and absentee king-emperor. Some of these German states were so tiny that their lords were unable to equip their armies of a few score men with artillery, because they had no money with which to buy guns, and no territory extensive enough to hold a range for practice. There were, however, about half a dozen considerable powers, round whose conflicts and intrigues the internal history of Germany revolved for a couple of centuries and more. In the north were: (1) the Duchy of Saxony, with Dresden on the Middle Elbe as its centre, held since 1422 by the House of Wettin; (2) the Margravate of Brandenburg, a frontier state

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facing the Slavs, over which the Hohenzollerns had held sway since 1415; and (3) the Hanseatic League, a confederation of free cities (of which Lübeck and Hamburg were chief), allied for mutual defence amid the late mediaeval anarchy. In the south the principal powers were: (4) the Duchy of Bavaria, with Munich as its capital, ruled by the House of Wittelsbach; (5) the Duchy of Austria, originally a margravate (*the Ostmark*) carved out of Bavarian territory for the defence of Germany from the Magyars of Hungary: since the end of the thirteenth century it had been held by the acquisitive House of Hapsburg; and (6) the County Palatine of the Rhine, with Heidelberg as its seat of government: it, too, was ruled by a member of the Wittelsbach family.

II

One of the main European movements of the late Middle Age had been the formation of national states. In England, for example, by the end of the fifteenth century the various races (Ivernian, Celtic, Teutonic), the once-independent kingdoms (Angle, Saxon, Jutish), the different social classes (nobles, freemen, serfs) had become fused into a single self-conscious and vigorous nation. Similarly, in France the process of unification may be regarded as complete when Brittany, the last of the great feudal fiefs, was annexed to the crown by the marriage of

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the Duchess Anne to King Charles VIII in 1491. Almost simultaneously Spain was consolidated when the combined forces of the two 'Catholic kings,' Ferdinand of Aragon and his wife Isabella of Castile, conquered the last remnant of the Moorish Caliphate, Granada, in 1492.

Germany had inevitably been affected by this trend towards unification, centralisation, nationhood. Several of her late mediaeval emperors had endeavoured to reduce to discipline and order the chaotic mass of petty principalities of which they were titular heads. In particular, the Luxemburger, Charles IV (1346-78), had tried to convert the imperial office into a monarchy nominally elective but really hereditary in his House. His famous 'Golden Bull,' however, in attempting to frame a constitution, had merely (as Lord Bryce remarked) 'legalised anarchy.' His son, the volatile Sigismund (1410-37), had with equal unsuccess tried to reconstitute Germany as a federation. His successor, the Hapsburg Albert (1438-40), and the long line of Hapsburg emperors who followed him, almost abandoned the attempt, and devoted all their energies and skill to the task of aggrandising their family. In this task they succeeded to perfection, mainly by the process of politic marriages :

Alii bella gerant, tu felix Austria nube.

Their success, however, was not to the interest of

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Germany; for they secured too much non-German territory, in particular, the Italian Tyrol, the Czech Bohemia, the Slovak Moravia, the Magyar Hungary, and the Slavonic Croatia. The unification of Germany became increasingly opposed to the interests of the House of Hapsburg. Indeed when, in the nineteenth century, this unification was accomplished, the first step in the process was the expulsion of the Hapsburgs with all their territories (including the purely Germanic Austria).

It was an immeasurably grave misfortune not only for the Germanic peoples, but also for Europe and the world, that Germany did not attain national unity at the same time as the Western peoples, namely, in the fifteenth century. For the characteristic of all newly constituted and for-the-first-time self-conscious national states is, apparently, extreme pugnacity, intense selfishness, entire unscrupulousness, and insatiable aggressiveness. England herself, under Henry VIII and Elizabeth, displayed all these characteristics of robustious youth; so did France under Francis I and Henry II; so too did Spain under Charles I and Philip II. Inflamed by the novel passion of patriotism, they fought among themselves for glory, property, and power; and they all exploited the recently discovered Oceans and Continents, and founded large overseas empires. By the seventeenth century they had all worked off their juvenile exuberance and were settling down to

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the serious business of political maturity. In the eighteenth century they had reached the stage of prosperous commercial activity. In the nineteenth they resembled respectable old retired gentlemen, much concerned with philanthropy and religion.

Meantime Germany remained in a condition of more than mediaeval anarchy ; for, as we have now to observe, theology came in to stir up the chaos with a sword. Hence, from one cause and another, German unification was postponed for four centuries. So it comes to pass that Germany to-day is in the same stage of political development as were England, France, and Spain at the beginning of the sixteenth century. She displays precisely the same qualities of pugnacity, perfidy, selfishness, and aggressiveness —the same lust for dominion and empire—as marked the Western nations four hundred years ago. Hitler and his gang of international criminals are the political and ethical contemporaries of Caesar Borgia, Machiavelli, Castruccio Castracani, and Ludovico Sforza. Unfortunately, however, they have behind them armies a hundred times as large as those of the sixteenth-century tyrants, and they are furnished with weapons a thousand times more deadly.

III

The Emperor Maximilian, who succeeded his feeble and ineffective father, Frederick III, in 1493,

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did, indeed, make a fitful effort to revive the imperial power, restore order in Germany, and develop some sort of central government. He was a restless and versatile person, full of ideas and schemes of reform, but lacking in persistence and staying power. More serious still, he had no army behind him and no money in his exchequer. In vain, therefore, did he proclaim the public peace; demand the payment of a 'common penny' from his nominal subjects; re-organise the imperial chamber (*Reichskammergericht*); institute an Aulic council (*Reichshofrat*); try to reinvigorate the Diet; divide Germany into ten circles (*Kreisen*) for police purposes. The forces of ascendant feudalism and rampant particularism were too strong to be reduced by anything short of conquest or revolution. Long before Maximilian died (A.D. 1519) he was compelled to lapse into an impotence almost as complete as his father's.

He may be said to have been happy in the occasion of his death, for only two years earlier Martin Luther had nailed his famous theses to the door of the Wittenberg church; had thrown down his challenge to the Papacy; and had plunged the flaming sword of theological controversy into the seething cauldron of Germany's political anarchy. Into the causes of the so-called Reformation in Germany it is not necessary for us to enter in detail. The movement was a complicated and many-sided one. Intellectually, it was a revolt against authority in matters of opinion;

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morally, it was a protest against the gross corruption of the clergy, the flagrant depravity of the papal court, and the crying scandal of the sale of indulgences; economically, it was an effort by the secular princes to seize the vast properties of the bishoprics and abbacies, and to stop the incessant flow of gold and silver from Germany to Rome; politically, it was a belated rebellion of the Teuton against the Roman domination, a declaration of independence against the papal suzerainty.

Luther, when he propounded his ninety-five theses against indulgences, had no idea of the pother he was about to cause. But after he had been compelled by the clever but highly injudicious Eck to appeal to the Bible and the Fathers against the Popes and the Councils (A.D. 1519), and after he had been excommunicated by the Pope (A.D. 1520), and banned by the Diet of the Empire (A.D. 1521), the combatants were arrayed for the great encounter. Germany was divided in irremediable schism. Luther was necessarily opposed by the Emperor (Charles V, 1519-56) and by the ecclesiastical princes. But most of the secular princes and free imperial cities joined the party of the 'Protestants,' influenced probably mainly by the prospect of emancipation from the Empire and the Papacy, and by the lure of much ecclesiastical loot. Among the leading Lutherans were the Electors of Saxony and Brandenburg, the Landgrave of Hesse, and the rulers of Brunswick,

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Anhalt, Baden, and Würtemberg. Steadily faithful to Catholicism, however, remained the Duke of Bavaria.

It is probable that the Emperor and the Catholic powers would have been strong enough to stamp out the Protestant rebellion had it not been for the fact that Charles was involved in frequent wars with Francis I of France, and gravely menaced by the Turks, who actually conquered the greater part of Hungary in 1526, and advanced as far as Vienna in 1529. As it was, after many fluctuations, stalemate was reached in A.D. 1555. By the Peace of Augsburg, concluded that year, it was agreed (1) that each prince should determine the religion—whether Catholic or Lutheran—of his subjects; (2) that Church property secularised before 1552 should not be restored to the Church, but should be retained by its new possessors; (3) that if in the future any Catholic bishop or abbot should turn Lutheran, he should vacate his office, and should not retain it with the right to draw its revenues and dictate the religion of his subjects; and (4) that the imperial chamber should be composed of equal numbers of Catholics and Lutherans.

The Peace of Augsburg, with its curious Erastian principle of ‘cujus regio ejus religio,’ marks a small but distinct step on the road to ecclesiastical toleration. It was due, like most of the steps along that narrow way, rather to political necessity than to enlightened policy. Nevertheless it was decidedly

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to the good that a man should have a choice between two creeds instead of being kept rigidly to one only ; so that if he changed from the one to the other he should have to send not for the undertaker but merely for the furniture remover.

IV

The Peace of Augsburg restored tranquillity to Germany for the moment, but it was an unstable tranquillity born of exhaustion and compromise. Moreover, it contained in itself the seeds of a new and still more deadly conflict. For, first, the principle ‘cujus regio ejus religio’ left the determination of the faith wholly to the caprice of the princes, whose oscillations were frequently themselves determined more by political expediency than by religious conviction. Secondly, the free imperial cities, since they were nominally under the direct authority of the Emperor, were not allowed the liberty of choice conceded to the princes. They were reserved for Catholicism, in spite of the fact that among their citizens Protestant dissent found its strongest supporters. Thirdly, the stipulation that fixed the date A.D. 1552 as that which should decide the validity of the title to secularised ecclesiastical lands was arbitrary and irritating. The Catholics felt that they had the right to recover *all* their confiscated property. The Protestants not only refused to surrender

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lands secularised after 1552, but continued to seize and confiscate even more bishoprics and abbeys. Fourthly, although under the rule respecting ‘ecclesiastical reservations’ it was stipulated that if a Catholic bishop turned Lutheran he should vacate his see, the Protestants contended that if his chapter accompanied him into the Lutheran camp they should all of them be entitled to retain their offices and emoluments. Finally, and most serious of all, the Peace of Augsburg envisaged the existence of no form of religion except Catholicism and Lutheranism. Now, even before the conclusion of the treaty, another form of faith, hostile to both Catholicism and Lutheranism, was beginning to make its way into Germany. This was the extreme and militant Calvinism of Geneva. After A.D. 1555 it made great progress in the Rhineland, its most important convert being the Elector Frederick III, Count Palatine. The Calvinists clamoured to be admitted to the privileges enjoyed by the Lutherans.

During the latter half of the sixteenth century both Lutheranism and Calvinism made rapid headway in Germany. In fact, under the Emperor Maximilian II (1564–76) it seemed as though they would entirely oust Catholicism. In spite of the law, secularisations went on apace, and numerous bishops—especially those who wanted to marry and start family life—persuaded their chapters to join them in domesticity and elect them as lay ‘administrators’ of their former

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dioceses. So favourable, indeed, was Maximilian to Protestantism that probably he himself would have become Lutheran, and carried the Empire bodily into the Protestant camp, had he not realised that by doing so he would destroy the hope (which at the time he strongly cherished) of succeeding to the vast monarchy of his most Catholic cousin, Philip II of Spain.

The apparently imminent triumph of Protestantism in Germany, however, was prevented by the advent of the Jesuits upon the scene, and by the resolute activity of the Catholic Duke of Bavaria and his episcopal brother, Ernest, who ultimately attained the arch-see of Cologne. Inspired and led by them, the Catholic princes, bishops, and abbots began vigorously to suppress Protestantism in their territories and to expel Protestants. They made, too, strenuous efforts to recover for the Church all lands secularised since A.D. 1552. They insisted, moreover, on the strict observance of the law respecting reservations, and succeeded in removing a number of renegade ecclesiastics who had become Lutheran 'administrators.' Above all, they strove utterly to crush Calvinism, which did not enjoy the protection of the Treaty of Augsburg. For Calvinism was the fighting creed of the Reformation. Its doctrine of predestination struck at the root of the whole sacramental system of the Mediaeval Church; its proclamation of the priesthood of all believers

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was a challenge to the entire Roman hierarchy from acolyte to Pope.

V

The intense activity of the party of the Counter-Reformation in South Germany spread alarm in the ranks of the Protestants who had been expecting a speedy and complete triumph for their cause. The unprotected Calvinists, in particular, were so perturbed that in A.D. 1608 they formed a Calvinistic Union in self-defence. It consisted mainly of the princes and cities of the Upper Rhineland, under the headship of the Elector Palatine. The Catholics at once responded to this challenge by organising a Catholic League (A.D. 1609), of which Maximilian of Bavaria was appointed chief. It at once proceeded to levy troops, which were placed under the command of the Count of Tilly, one of the ablest soldiers of the age.

The rival organisations, Catholic and Calvinist, faced one another angrily and expectantly, for ten years. Then they came to grips over the question of the Bohemian Succession. Bohemia had at one time been an independent kingdom with an elective crown. In A.D. 1526, however, as the result of politic marriage, it had passed into Hapsburg possession, and in A.D. 1556 had been incorporated in the empire of its ruler, Ferdinand I. Ever since the time of the 'Golden Bull' of A.D. 1356 its king had been recognised as one of the seven electors whose votes

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determined the choice of the ‘Holy Roman Emperor.’ Now at the beginning of the seventeenth century the Bohemian vote was of cardinal importance. For, apart from the King of Bohemia, the electoral college at that date consisted of three Catholics (the archbishops of Cologne, Mainz, and Trèves) and three Protestants (the Duke of Saxony, the Margrave of Brandenburg, and the Count Palatine). If, therefore, Bohemia—which was strongly impregnated with Hussite, Lutheran, and Calvinistic dissent—should assert its ancient right of election, and should, on the decease of the Emperor Matthias, choose a Protestant king, the imperial election itself might result in the appointment of a Protestant Emperor.

Matthias himself was much perturbed by the prospect. As he was childless, he concentrated the efforts of his later years upon securing the succession in all his dominions for his nephew, Ferdinand of Styria, a strong and aggressive champion of the Counter-Reformation. He readily gained the consent of his family, including his Spanish relatives, to Ferdinand’s succession in Austria and its dependencies. With more difficulty he managed to get his nephew elected King of Hungary. But Bohemia was the crux. For large bodies of Bohemian magnates were determined to take the occasion of the death of Matthias, whenever it should occur, as an opportunity to shake off the Hapsburg connection, abolish

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Catholicism, and establish Bohemia as a free and Protestant principality. Matthias heard of the intrigue and countered it with exceptional vigour and success. Having summoned an unexpected and extraordinary meeting of the Bohemian Diet, and having overawed the assembly by lavish display of force and by fierce menaces, he compelled the terrified magnates to rescind the right of electing to the kingship and to recognise Ferdinand of Styria as monarch by hereditary right (A.D. 1617).

VI

Ferdinand at once assumed the reins of government, although, being occupied himself in Styria and elsewhere, he had to administer the kingdom by means of Regents. The new régime was marked by a vigorous crusade against all forms of religious dissent. The Protestants (faced with extinction), the Constitutionalists (determined to revive the right of election), and the Nationalists (bent on expelling the alien Hapsburgs), joined arms and prepared to resist. They found a well-born and capable chief in Count Henry of Thurn. Under his leadership, on May 23rd 1618, a large company of armed men paid a visit to the Castle of Prague in order to interview the Regents, and persuade or compel them to cease their persecutions, to restore the right of free election to the kingship, to sever their connection with the Hapsburgs. The meeting took place; the Regents

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proved to be unyielding ; high words were bandied. Finally, by an act of spontaneous passion, the two most obnoxious were seized and, in spite of frantic struggles, hurled from a high window of the castle into the ditch some sixty feet below. By a miracle they were not killed : for Providence or chance had collected on the very spot where they fell a vast heap of manure. Their ‘defenestration,’ in spite of the fact that it involved little more than damage to clothes and dignity, was taken as a declaration of war, and both sides prepared for battle.

When the Bohemians had thus repudiated their allegiance to Ferdinand II, had hurled his representatives from the window, and had reasserted their right to elect the monarch, they had still to decide whom to choose. The post that they had to offer was not a very attractive one, for it involved leadership in the impending struggle with the gathering hosts of the Hapsburgs (both Austrian and Spanish) and the Catholic League. They found, however, a person rash enough to accept the dangerous gift in Frederick V, Elector Palatine, head of the Calvinistic Union, and son-in-law of James I of England. Both they and he counted on help from England which did not arrive ; for James had a horror of war, and also no love for elective monarchy. As a leading exponent of the doctrine of divine hereditary right, he strongly disapproved of his son-in-law’s acceptance of the Bohemian crown.

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VII

The Thirty Years War which broke out in 1618 and lasted until 1648, passed through four phases. Beginning as a purely local struggle, it spread until it involved, first, all Germany, and finally a large part of Europe. For while Spain intervened on the Catholic side, the Protestant cause was taken up in turn by Denmark, Sweden, and (strange to say) France. Even England, in spite of James's reluctance, was dragged in for a few ineffective years beginning in A.D. 1624. The first, or Bohemian, phase of the war (A.D. 1618-23) saw the complete triumph of the Catholic cause in the Czech kingdom. The decisive battle, known as that of the White Mountain, just outside Prague, was fought on November 8th 1620, between the forces of Frederick and those of Maximilian and Tilly. The victory of the League was overwhelming in its completeness. Prague at once surrendered; all Bohemia made its submission; Frederick and his chief supporters fled in disgraceful panic and never rested until they reached the security of the Dutch Netherlands. The brief reign of the 'Winter King' was followed by an exile that terminated only with his death in 1632.* Maximilian of Bavaria, who shared with Tilly the triumph of 1620,

* It will be remembered that this Elector Frederick was, by his wife Elizabeth of England, father of Prince Rupert and grandfather of King George I.

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received as his reward the district of the Upper Palatinate, together with the electoral hat of which the fugitive Frederick was deprived.

The victory of the Catholic League in 1620 was so decisive that hope rose in the breasts of its leaders that not only might Calvinism be stamped out, and the breaches of the Augsburg settlement repaired, but that the settlement itself might be rescinded and Lutheranism, as well as Calvinism, suppressed. Then began a persecution fierce and grim. Bohemia was, of course, the first to feel its force. Scenes were enacted in Prague and elsewhere that were closely parallel to those destined to be witnessed some three centuries later (A.D. 1939). The constitutional charter of the Czech nation was torn up; its religious liberties abolished; its leading nobles executed; its university despoiled and the rector barbarously mutilated. The estates of 728 magnates were confiscated; 30,000 families were driven penniless into exile. From Bohemia the horror spread, and soon the great Lutheran princes of the North became alarmed for their own security.

Chief among these was Christian IV of Denmark, who, as Duke of Holstein, was a prince of the Empire and a member of the Lower Saxon Circle. He was also the possessor of the secularised bishoprics of Bremen and Verden whose territories commanded the lower waters of the Weser and the Elbe. He was a zealous Lutheran, but his interests were by no

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means wholly religious. He was eager to secure ascendancy in the Baltic and to establish control of the mouths of all the German rivers that flowed into that sea. He had recently fortified Glückstadt on the Elbe as a foil to Hamburg, and he had his eye on Lübeck. His religious zeal and his commercial avidity were stimulated to the war-point by a promise from England of £30,000 a month towards the cost of restoring Frederick to the Palatinate (but not to Bohemia). So in 1624 Christian IV of Denmark placed himself at the head of a Lutheran coalition that planned an invasion of Catholic South Germany. His advent inaugurated the second, or Danish, period of the war, which lasted five years (1624-29).

VIII

If Christian and his allies had had none but Tilly and the Catholic League to deal with they would probably have been successful. But Christian's appearance on the Protestant side was more than balanced by the spectacular entry on the Catholic side of one of the most remarkable adventurers of the time, namely, Albert von Wallenstein. This man, a Bohemian noble, a convert to Catholicism from the Hussite Communion, had become by means of two judicious marriages, supplemented by the purchase at nominal prices of masses of the Bohemian estates confiscated after the battle of the White Moun-

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tain, the richest man in the Empire. In 1625, at his own cost, he raised an army of 50,000 volunteers and offered his services to the Emperor Ferdinand. Ferdinand, although suspicious and apprehensive of this formidable reinforcement over which he had no control, dared not decline the offer. So Wallenstein and his storm-troopers joyously entered into the fray.

Wallenstein's zeal for Catholicism was even more mixed and diluted than Christian's for Lutheranism. His ambition was to become a territorial prince. He demanded and received from the Emperor the Dukedom of Mecklenburg, and he set out with his host to conquer it. Advancing up the Elbe valley from Bohemia, he defeated the Lutherans at Dessau (April 1625), ravaged Anhalt and Brandenburg, overran Mecklenburg, and finally laid siege to the great port of Stralsund. Meanwhile Tilly and the Catholic League—who were even more suspicious of Wallenstein than was the Emperor—were operating against Christian of Denmark in the valley of the Weser. They inflicted upon him a crushing defeat at Lutter (August 1626), drove him back northward, and ended by laying siege to his great fortress at Glückstadt. Glückstadt proved to be impregnable, as also did Stralsund; but Tilly and Wallenstein, joining forces, overran Holstein and even invaded Denmark.

By 1629 Christian was eager to make peace, and Wallenstein was ready to meet him. For Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden was stirring, and Wallenstein

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did not want to have both the Scandinavian monarchs on his hands at once. So on May 22nd 1629 the Treaty of Lübeck ended the second phase of the long war. Christian of Denmark withdrew from Germany, with all his hereditary possessions intact. But he had to surrender all the secularised bishoprics that he held in the Empire, and promise to meddle no more in German affairs. Once more Protestantism was in eclipse. On March 6th 1629 a general Edict of Restitution was issued ordering the return to the Catholic clergy of all lands secularised since 1555. That meant the return of the vast estates of two archbishoprics, twelve bishoprics, and over a hundred smaller ecclesiastical foundations.

IX

The entry of Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden marked the beginning of the third, or Swedish, phase of the Thirty Years War: it lasted for six years (1629-35). The causes that led the Swedish monarch to intervene were primarily two: first, he was a devoted Lutheran, and he saw that his faith was in danger of being stamped out in Germany; secondly, he also was anxious to secure the command of the Baltic, and he realised that he would have a formidable rival if Wallenstein were allowed to establish himself as Duke of Mecklenburg. When, however, Gustavus landed at Usedom in June 1630, Wallenstein was no longer formidable. His lack of religious

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zeal had alienated the Catholic League ; his ambitions had alarmed the princes ; the depredations of his armies had alienated the people ; his insolence and independence had exasperated the Emperor. So in the very month in which Gustavus landed, Wallenstein was dismissed. His army was in part disbanded ; in part transferred to the command of Tilly. The consequence was disaster to the Catholic cause. In September 1631 Tilly was decisively defeated by Gustavus at Breitenfeld. As a result the Catholic armies were driven out of North Germany, and that region rendered safe for Protestantism.

A few months, however, before this cardinal battle had been fought, an event had occurred in that Northern Germany which typified the horrors of this suicidal civil war, namely, the sack of Magdeburg. Magdeburg was a mediaeval archbishopric of which the Lutheran Elector of Brandenburg had become administrator. It was one of those the return of which had been ordered by the Edict of Restitution in 1629, and the archbishop appointed to receive it was none other than a son of the Emperor himself. The inhabitants, however, strongly Protestant, refused to admit the Catholics, and so Tilly was sent to capture the city. After a few weeks' siege his men took it by storm. Let the rest be told in the words of a German historian :

Here unfolded a scene of horrors for which history has no language. Neither innocent childhood nor

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hopeless old age, neither youth, sex, rank, nor beauty could disarm the fury of the conquerors. Wives were violated in the arms of their husbands, daughters at the feet of their parents, and the defenceless sex was exposed to the double sacrifice of virtue and life. No situation, however obscure or however sacred, escaped the rapacity of the enemy. In a single church fifty-three women were found beheaded. . . . To augment the confusion and to divert the resistance of the inhabitants, the imperial forces had, in the commencement of the assault, fired the town in several places. The wind rising rapidly spread the flames, till the blaze became universal. Fearful indeed was the tumult, with clouds of smoke, heaps of dead bodies, the clash of swords, the crash of falling ruins, and streams of blood. The atmosphere glowed, and the intolerable heat at last forced even the murderers to take refuge in their camp. In less than twelve hours, this strong, populous, and flourishing city, one of the finest in Germany, was reduced to ashes, with the exception of two churches and a few houses. . . . More than six thousand bodies were thrown into the Elbe to clear the streets; a much larger number had been consumed by the flames. The whole number of the slain was reckoned at not less than thirty thousand.*

The total number of inhabitants before the siege had been estimated at thirty-six thousand. Tilly seemed to be proud of his day's work. In his report to the Emperor he said: 'Since the destruction of Troy and Jerusalem no such siege has been seen.'

The horror and disgust excited throughout Europe

* Schiller, *Geschichte des dreissigjährigen Krieges*.

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as the story of the sack of Magdeburg spread were ultimately fatal to the imperial cause. The hesitant Electors of Brandenburg and Saxony openly threw in their lot with Gustavus and helped him to clear North Germany of Tilly's ravishers. Then they accompanied him into South Germany and joined him in challenging the Emperor in the seat of his power. France, too, in spite of her staunch Catholicism, showed signs of intervention on the Protestant side. The Emperor in his desperation had to humble himself and recall Wallenstein on that ambitious *condottiere*'s own terms. Wallenstein, however, no more than Tilly, could withstand the genius of Gustavus. He, too, was defeated at Lützen (November 1632). At the moment of victory, however, the great Gustavus was killed, and his death undoubtedly saved the imperial cause from extinction. In the next big battle—that of Nördlingen (September 1634)—the Protestants were beaten and driven out of South Germany. In order to save North Germany from a new invasion they appealed for aid to France, and France, always hostile to the Hapsburgs, effectively came to their assistance.

X

With the entry of France began the last, or French, period of the protracted conflict (1635–48). During that phase the war lost its dominantly ecclesiastical

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character, and became increasingly a mere conflict between Bourbons and Hapsburgs for territories in the Rhineland, and for ascendancy in Europe. French foreign policy at this time, although directed by a prince of the Catholic Church, the eminent Cardinal Richelieu, was entirely nationalist and non-religious in character. The great churchman had no hesitation in allying himself with the Protestant, the Turk, and even the Devil, provided only he could enhance the power of his country. In this respect he was the follower of the Englishman Wolsey, and the precursor of the German Bismarck.

There is no need for us to detail the dreary and undramatic episodes of this final stage of the war. Both the German parties, utterly exhausted, subsided increasingly into the quiescence of stupor—the Protestants in the North, the Catholics in the South—leaving the struggle to be carried on by the Spaniards from their base in the Free County of Burgundy, and the French from Alsace-Lorraine. It was a ludicrous termination to a conflict which had begun in a contest for the crown of Bohemia. By 1642 Spain had had enough, and sought for peace. France, however, was hard to satisfy, and both negotiations and war were carried on for six more years. Finally, in 1648, the Treaty of Westphalia was concluded, concerning which more anon.

CHAPTER V

THE WARS OF FREDERICK THE GREAT

I

RARELY has the folly as well as the wickedness of war been more amply demonstrated than it was by the terrible thirty years' conflict in Germany dealt with in the last chapter. The vilest passions were roused to the pitch of insanity; religion, both Catholic and Protestant, was degraded and discredited; the whole country was desolated and depopulated—and ultimately a settlement was concluded which a few hours of friendly and rational discussion should have made easy at the beginning.

Of the destruction wrought by the war the detailed evidence is copious and overwhelming. Two brief summaries, one English, the other German, must here suffice. Says Mr Baring-Gould in his *Germany*:

Of the destruction wrought in those terrible thirty years it is hard to realise the extent. Two-thirds of the inhabitants had perished, not only by the sword, but by the miseries which followed in the train of war, namely, famine and pestilence. Hundreds of villages had disappeared; others stood empty, unpopulated.

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The cornfields were trampled down and untilled. Trade had failed in the towns, the streets were deserted and grass-grown, the doors of the houses broken in. . . . In 1618 the population of Germany numbered between 16 and 17 millions; in 1648 there were not quite four millions. So terrible had been the famine during the war that cases of cannibalism were not rare. Bands of men were formed who lived like wild beasts, preying on those they caught. Near Worms such a band was attacked and dispersed, as they were cooking in a great cauldron human legs and arms. Starving creatures cut down criminals from the gallows to eat them.

W. Menzel, in his *Geschichte der Deutschen*, goes into fuller particulars of the appalling desolation. He ends his account thus :

The country was completely impoverished. The working class had almost totally disappeared. The manufactories had been destroyed by fire; industry and commerce had passed into other hands. Immense provinces, once flourishing and populous, lay entirely waste and uninhabited, and were only by slow degrees repeopled by foreign emigrants or by soldiery. The original character and language of the inhabitants were by this means entirely altered. In Franconia, which owing to her central position had been traversed by every party during the war, the misery and depopulation had reached to such a pitch that the Franconian estates, with the assent of the ecclesiastical princes, abolished the celibacy of the Catholic clergy, and permitted each man to marry two wives, on account of the numerical superiority of the women over the men.

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The last remains of political liberty had, during the war, also been snatched from the people. . . . Germany had lost all save her hopes for the future.

The Peace of Westphalia (October 1648) which brought to an end this ghastly conflict represented a settlement not of agreement or appeasement so much as one of exhaustion and stalemate. Its provisions fell into two main groups, namely, (1) ecclesiastical, (2) territorial. On the ecclesiastical side, it was stipulated that Calvinists should enjoy the same rights as those conceded to Lutherans in 1555; that in the Imperial Court of Justice the three recognised forms of religion should be equally represented; and that the long-disputed lands of the Church should be stabilised as they were in 1624. On the territorial side, the Elector Palatine (son of the 'Winter King') recovered the Upper Palatinate and his electoral hat; Maximilian of Bavaria retained the Lower Palatinate, and for him a new electorate was instituted. Saxony and Brandenburg, the two great Protestant powers of the North, both received considerable extensions, mainly at the expense of the bishoprics. Sweden and France came off best. The former recovered the secularised sees of Bremen and Verden, and acquired Western Pomerania; the latter secured Austrian Alsace, and was established in possession of the great frontier fortresses of Metz, Toul, and Verdun. The sovereignty of the numerous German

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States was recognised, and they were allowed to make treaties with foreign powers, so long as they were not directed against the Emperor or the Empire. At the same time the independence of the Swiss Cantons and of the Dutch Netherlands, long an accomplished fact, was formally recognised.

The Peace of Westphalia, one of the most significant of European diplomatic instruments, marked the establishment of the modern state system, based on the principle of territorial sovereignty, theoretical equality, and internal autonomy. It marked also the virtual extinction of the 'Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation,' although its ghost continued to haunt the earth until 1806. For Ferdinand II had staked the effective existence of the Empire upon the suppression of Protestantism, and he had conspicuously failed to suppress it. From 1648 onward the Hapsburg emperors remained little more than rulers of Austria and its appendant territories, which became increasingly non-Germanic, namely, Slav, Magyar, Rumanian, Italian. Germany itself was almost disintegrated. Its princes, great and small, were recognised as sovereign potentates, with the right to coin money, maintain armies, send diplomatic representatives to the courts of Europe, conclude alliances, and wage war. All consciousness of German unity or nationality seemed to vanish away. Perfect particularism prevailed universally.

II

Nowhere was this self-centred and selfish particularism more evident than in the Electoral Margravate of Brandenburg. Few regions in Germany, it is true, had suffered more severely during the Thirty Years War than had this Lutheran state. Its ruler during the first twenty-two years of the great struggle (1618-40) had been George William of the House of Hohenzollern, a feeble and hesitant creature, pronounced by his descendant, Frederick the Great, to have been ‘utterly unfit to rule.’ He could never make up his mind because, as someone unkindly remarked, he had no mind to make up. The consequence of his vacillation was that he incurred the hostility of both sides, and was condemned to see his territories wasted, not only by the predatory hordes of Wallenstein and the devastating hosts of Tilly, but also by the more disciplined but equally exigent armies of Gustavus Adolphus. For three years, indeed, Brandenburg was the main theatre of combat, and it was plundered from end to end by Imperialists, Leaguers, Saxons, and Swedes. It had no natural defensive frontiers; it was traversed by both the great rivers, Elbe and Oder, up and down whose valleys the conflicting armies marched; it had no forces of its own capable of saving it from depredation. The incapable Elector himself was driven out: he fled

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to the East Prussian portion of his dominions, and there expired—at Königsberg—in December 1640.

He was succeeded by a man of very different



The Expansion of Prussia under Frederick the Great.

character and calibre, his son, Frederick William, known commonly as 'The Great Elector,' who was destined to rule for nearly half a century (A.D. 1640–1688). Since this man, a pioneer aggressor, was

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he who laid the foundations of the edifice of the Hohenzollern autocracy in Prussia; of Prussian ascendancy in Germany; and of Germany's dominance in Europe, it is desirable that we should here diverge from our main narrative for a short time in order to trace (1) the origin and development of the House of Hohenzollern, and (2) the making of the composite state of Brandenburg-Prussia.

III

The Hohenzollerns were a Swabian family whose head at the beginning of the fifteenth century—Frederick by name—was Burgrave of the wealthy commerical town of Nuremberg. This astute Burgrave in 1410, when there was a triangular contest for the imperial crown, put his influence (which was small) and his money (which was considerable) into the cause of the successful candidate, Sigismund, and the grateful Emperor rewarded him in 1415 by conferring upon him the Margravate of Brandenburg which was at that time in his own possession. This Margravate carried with it the electoral dignity with which Frederick was formally invested in 1417.

At the time of Frederick's investiture Brandenburg had already had nearly five centuries of eventful history. The original 'mark,' or border county—the Altmark or Nordmark of German history—had been created by the Saxon King Henry the

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Fowler, about A.D. 928, as a base of operations against the Slavs. It lay wholly on the west side of the Elbe, save that in the fortress of Tangermünde (which long remained its capital) it had a bridgehead to the east. From the beginning it was aggressive—aggression, indeed, was its *raison d'être*. The old margraves, particularly those of the Ascanian House (A.D. 1133–1319), had steadily encroached upon the lands of the Slavs until they had reached the River Oder, and had established a bridgehead at Frankfort, as a base for further conquests. The territory thus acquired between Elbe and Oder, with Berlin (established about A.D. 1250) as its centre, was known later as the Middle Mark: it had two northern appendages in the Vormark (Priegnitz) and the Ukermark. It was this composite, fourfold margravate that was put into the hands of Frederick of Hohenzollern in 1415. It was a territory without natural frontiers, or homogeneous population. It was governed in all sorts of different ways. It was obviously impermanent. It demanded either expansion or extinction. That it escaped extinction was due to the successful acquisitiveness of its Hohenzollern rulers, among whom the Great Elector (1640–88) and Frederick the Great (1740–86) rank first.

IV

To enumerate the pretexts and describe the processes by means of which the Hohenzollern

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margravate and monarchy were successively built up would require more space than can here be spared.* The main steps alone can be mentioned. They were as follows: (1) The New Mark, lying beyond the Oder, and stretching northward through Eastern Pomerania till it almost touched the Baltic coast, was added by the Elector Frederick II in 1455. (2) The Elector Albert Achilles, 1470–86, annexed numerous small tracts, mainly on his frontiers, such as Krossen, just above Frankfort on Oder. (3) The Elector John Cicero, 1486–99, secured Zossen, a district not large but valuable as being only some twenty miles south of Berlin. (4) Then came the Reformation. It was a godsend to this acquisitive House. By turning Protestant it was able to mop up the territories of secularised bishoprics and abbeys on a vast scale: the most important items were the episcopal lands of Brandenburg, Havelberg, Lebus, Buskow, and Storkow. The succulent archbishopric of Magdeburg also lay within the Hohenzollern province, but it was not fully absorbed until after the Thirty Years War.

The profits of perversion which thus accrued to the Brandenburg Hohenzollerns, great as they were,

* The student who wishes to pursue this theme may be referred to the excellent volume by Sir John Marriott and Sir Charles Grant Robertson entitled *The Evolution of Prussia* (Clarendon Press, 1915). There is also an admirable map, giving all the essential data in graphic form, in F. W. Putzger's *Historischer Schul-Atlas* (Map 30, *Entwicklung Preussens 1415–1806*).

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were eclipsed in magnitude by those that fell to a junior member of their House, namely, Albert of Ansbach. In A.D. 1511 this man was elected High Master of the crusading order of Teutonic Knights who from Königsberg ruled the Slavonic province of East Prussia, which the Knights had conquered and converted to Catholicism in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In A.D. 1525 this Albert, with the collusion of his fellow warrior-priests, threw off his ecclesiastical orders, proclaimed himself a Protestant, married, and appropriated the territory which had been placed in his hands as a sacred trust, safeguarded though it was by the most solemn vows. The King of Poland, Sigismund I, who happened to be his uncle, complacently connived at his sacrilegious theft, and created him Duke of East Prussia, on condition that he held the duchy as a fief of the Polish crown, owing suit and service to the Polish king.

The Hohenzollerns of Brandenburg were naturally much interested in following the progress of the Reformation in East Prussia. They welcomed the illuminated Albert and his wife to the Lutheran fold, and never rested until they had secured the reversion of their heritage. It fell to them in 1618 when the line of Albert became extinct. The Margrave of Brandenburg thus became also Duke of East Prussia, the two parts of his unwieldy dominions being divided by an awkward ‘Polish

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Corridor,' and his political obligations divided by a still more awkward double allegiance.

V

The lapse of East Prussia to the Elector of Brandenburg in A.D. 1618 exactly synchronised with two other important events, namely (1) the outbreak of the Thirty Years War, and (2) the succession to the Hohenzollern inheritance of the feckless George William. This unhappy man was, as we have already remarked, during the twenty-two years of his tenure of office, the luckless sport of blind fate and violent men. He lost golden opportunities of increasing his prestige and his power. Despised by both Catholics and Protestants, none of whom could get him to come to a decision, he saw his electorate ravaged from end to end by Austrians and Bavarians, Danes, Saxons, and Swedes in turn. Finally, as we have seen, he died, a fugitive from Germany, in the security and obscurity of his new East Prussian duchy.

When his son, Frederick William, the 'Great Elector,' succeeded to the *damnosa haereditas* in A.D. 1640, he found his scattered and diverse dominions in a deplorable condition of devastation and anarchy. Fortunately, by that time the war had shifted to the frontiers of Germany, so he was able from the beginning of his rule to set to work on reconstruction and reform. His first concern

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was to re-create the army, which had sunk to the condition of a disorderly and ineffective rabble. So successful was he in this task that when the Peace of Westphalia came to be concluded, he was able to speak with authority, and to emerge from the conference bringing with him a fresh batch of bishoprics and also the province of Eastern Pomerania (recovered from the Swedes), which went a long way towards filling up the gap between his German margravate and his Polish dukedom.

The remaining forty years of his electorate (1648-88) were spent in unremitting toil for the aggrandisement of Brandenburg-Prussia. He had no regard for Germany as a whole; no conception of Europe or of Humanity. On behalf of Brandenburg-Prussia he was ready to use all the force at his disposal. He was also equally ready on her behalf either to make or to break treaties. Thus by intervening in a war which took place between Poland and Sweden (A.D. 1655-60), and by alternately supporting and deserting both sides, he secured the emancipation of East Prussia from Polish suzerainty. Further, as the result of much negotiation and a considerable show of force, he was able in A.D. 1666 to establish secure possession of the Rhenish territories of Cleves, Mark, and Ravensberg to which the Hohenzollern had been making claims, by right of inheritance, for more than half a century.

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It was not, however, by external expansion but rather by internal organisation that the Great Elector's rule was made most memorable. He suppressed the anarchic and miscellaneous Diets that failed to govern his scattered and disparate dominions, and in their place set up a highly efficient and strongly centralised autocracy ; he instituted a competent privy council ; developed an effective civil service ; encouraged industry and commerce ; attracted by a tolerant religious policy large numbers of Huguenots exiled from France and Jews expelled from Spain, by whom new arts and crafts were introduced into his dominions. He even dreamed of naval and colonial expansion, and actually made experiments therein : but the day for that expansion had not then dawned. Before he died in A.D. 1688 he had laid firmly the foundations of that highly organised military and bureaucratic monarchy which two centuries later was destined to dominate both Germany and Europe. He was a king, and an absolute king, in all but name. He gave his people government, but he destroyed whatever soul they had previously possessed. He militarised and brutalised the Prussian nation, apparently permanently.

VI

The Great Elector passed on his power to a son, Frederick, as different a man from himself as he

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himself had been from his own feckless father, Elector George William. The Great Elector had concerned himself solely with the substance of power, not at all with its trappings. Frederick's main interests were centred in pageantry and display. Hence he concentrated his energies upon securing the title and paraphernalia of King. His well-drilled and finely equipped army of 40,000 men was the means by which he achieved his purpose. The Emperor Leopold, whose function it was to confer honours on members of his Empire, urgently needed his aid in the War of the Spanish Succession which began in 1701. In order to secure it he had, though with extreme unwillingness, to concede the royal title. He would not, however, allow the aspiring Frederick to be a king in Germany: there he remained merely Margrave and Elector of Brandenburg. He became 'King in Prussia,' that is of his dominantly Slavonic province that lay outside the Empire. The Prussian troops played a creditable if inconspicuous part under Marlborough at Blenheim, Ramillies, Oudenarde, and Malplaquet; also under Prince Eugene at Turin and Cassano. At the conclusion of the war, as a little memento, Prussia received the province of Upper Guelderland, subtracted from the Austrian Netherlands (1715).

At the time of the transfer of Upper Guelderland, King Frederick I was no more. He had died in 1713, passing on his composite dominions, his king-

ship, and his army (raised to 50,000 men) to his son Frederick William, known as the 'Soldier King.' He it was who introduced the habit, followed by all his successors, of the constant wearing of military garb. Indeed, when he lay upon his deathbed, and his chaplain read to him the solemn words 'Naked I came into the world, and naked shall I leave it,' he interrupted him with 'No: I shall have my uniform!' His whole soul was concentrated upon his army, which he raised to 90,000 men, and on which he spent five-sevenths of the whole revenue of his poverty-stricken state. He did not want war, for he did not want his expensive army to be injured. He used his menacing might as an adjunct to his unscrupulous diplomacy. He was an adept at the 'war of nerves.' He was a blusterer and a bully of the worst type, almost insane in his outbursts of demoniac fury. 'His violence was and still is notorious. He flung plates at his children, caned his son in public, cudgelled the inhabitants of his capital, flung the judges downstairs.' *

Only once, however, did he intervene in an armed conflict, and that only when the enemy, Sweden, was already beaten by a coalition of Danes, Poles, and Russians. He intervened merely that he might share the spoil, which for him consisted of a large part of Western Pomerania (including Stettin, Usedom, and Wollin) which gave him complete

* W. F. Reddaway, *Frederick the Great*, p. 21.

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control of the navigation of the Oder (1720). He was the pioneer of ‘Prussianism,’ that is to say of the general Germanic tendency to irrational and non-moral brutality raised to the highest degree. Having subjected his people, terrorised his neighbours, and ruined the character of his son, he drank himself to death before he was fifty-two (A.D. 1740), leaving behind him, together with his uniform, the most powerful and well-equipped military machine at that time in existence.

VII

Frederick II, known to history as ‘the Great,’ succeeded his father at the age of twenty-eight. He had loathed the paternal tyrant with a most intense detestation, and he had survived his brutality only by means of the most consummate hypocrisy, which the ‘Soldier King’ was too stupid to detect. He loved the things which his father had most despised—learning, literature, art, music, the society of cultured people, the sparkle of witty conversations. French was the language of his circle: he hated the harsh gutturals of the German speech, and he would have no German books in his library. But, with all his brilliance and vivacity, he had no heart and no conscience. His heart had been seared beyond recovery by the fires of domestic persecution; his conscience had been permanently atrophied by the atmosphere of incessant deceit in which for the

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last ten years of his father's life he had found it easiest to live.

He came to the Prussian throne at a critical moment in European history. On October 20th 1740 the Emperor Charles VI died, leaving no son. With him the male line of the Austrian Hapsburgs, who had held the imperial throne without a break for over three centuries, came to an end. Charles's later years had been largely occupied in obtaining guarantees that on his demise all the Hapsburg dominions—Austria, Hungary, Bohemia, Silesia, Moravia, the Tyrol, etc., etc.—should pass to his daughter Maria Theresa; and the imperial crown to her husband, Francis of Lorraine. Among the first to give the desired guarantee had been the 'Soldier King' of Prussia. No sooner, however, was Charles dead than Frederick, ignoring his father's pledge, and without a shred of valid right, sent an ultimatum to Maria Theresa, and, on her indignant rejection thereof, invaded and conquered Silesia. The province was, from his point of view, most desirable; so he took it. Its northern extremity was little more than a day's march from Berlin; it was rich in natural resources, especially copper, of which Brandenburg was short; it would serve as a valuable base for further aggressions whether to the east on Poland, or to the west on Bohemia and Moravia. In the fighting that ensued, the army of the 'Soldier King' proved its efficiency under

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his son's command. It defeated the Hapsburg forces at Mollwitz (April 1741) and before the end of the year had brought the province under Prussian control.

Maria Theresa by that time was in desperate straits. For she was being attacked simultaneously in her Austrian dominions by Charles Albert of Bavaria (who was elected Emperor in January 1742), and by the French. In order to counter this mortal menace to her very existence she felt it necessary to make peace with Frederick, leaving Silesia in his hands (Treaty of Berlin, July 1742). For two years Frederick was able, unmolested, to consolidate his conquest and exploit its resources. But Maria Theresa had no intention of allowing him to retain undisturbed possession. And during the same two years (1742-44) fortune turned in her favour. Loyally supported by her faithful Hungarians, and effectively assisted by George of Hanover (George II of Great Britain), she cleared the Bavarians and French out of her dominions, invaded Bavaria itself, and drove Charles Albert (Emperor Charles VII) in flight to Frankfort on Main. In 1744, then, Frederick realised that a Hapsburg attempt to recover Silesia would not be long postponed. So he anticipated events by making a new alliance with France and Bavaria, and once more taking the field. Again his army proved its superiority. It defeated the Austrians decisively at Hohenfriedberg (June 1745), overran Bohemia, and compelled Maria

Theresa a second time to confirm Frederick's possession of Silesia (Treaty of Dresden, December 1745). It was a profound humiliation for the proud Hapsburg queen; but it could not be avoided. It merely steeled her determination at some future time to have her revenge on her cynical despoiler. The opportunity, however, had not arrived when the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle (October 1748) brought the war of the Austrian Succession to an end. Silesia remained in Frederick's hands.*

VIII

Maria Theresa emerged from her eight years' Succession struggle with prestige enhanced, with power enlarged, and with territories intact save for Silesia. Her rival, Charles Albert of Bavaria, had perished miserably, a fugitive, in January 1745; and her husband, Francis of Lorraine, had been duly elected Emperor the following September.

The long conflict, however, had revealed many defects in the Hapsburg constitution, and after 1748 a body of energetic and able ministers, under the inspiration of the great Empress herself, set to work to effect the necessary reformation. Administration,

* During the course of the war, in A.D. 1744, a rich morsel fell to Frederick by good fortune. He inherited East Friesland, which gave him a considerable stretch of North Sea coast, the command of the River Ems and the valuable port of Emden. Thus Prussia became a potentially oceanic power.

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finance, industry, commerce, education, all came in for attention. But the two most radical changes were those that were effected in respect of (1) the army, (2) foreign policy. The army, immensely enlarged, was completely reorganised on the Prussian model, and on the basis of conscription. In foreign policy a veritable 'diplomatic revolution' was carried through. The Hohenzollern was now 'public enemy number one' to the Hapsburg. The old rivalry of Hapsburg and Bourbon was obsolete. Austria and France must draw together in order to suppress this aggressive upstart of the north. They did so during the years 1748–56 under the skilful guidance of the brilliant chancellor Kaunitz. In May 1756 a definite alliance was formed (Treaty of Versailles)—an alliance which ultimately led to the fateful marriage of the Empress's daughter, Marie Antoinette, to the French dauphin, afterwards King Louis XVI. The alliance was soon extended to include Russia and Saxony. By 1756, then, Prussia was fairly 'encircled,' thanks to the apprehension caused universally by the formidable power and the unprincipled aggressiveness of Frederick.

The Prussian King was not unaware of the gathering together of his enemies. He realised that his position was critical, and he looked round for possible allies. He found what he wanted in his uncle, George II of Hanover and Great Britain. For George II had himself in 1755 become embroiled with France in

North America, and was dreading a French invasion of Hanover. Hence he gladly concluded in 1756 a treaty of mutual defence with Frederick.

Thus safeguarded, Frederick felt that the time had come for action. He clearly saw that if he allowed Austria, France, Russia, and Saxony to complete their preparations for a concerted attack upon him, he could not hope to survive. So, acting on the defensive-offensive principle, in August 1756 he invaded Saxony (his nearest and smallest enemy), overwhelmed her, and passed on early next year into Bohemia. There he was ultimately checked by the Austrians (battle of Kolin, June 1757), and compelled to stand on the defensive against his now converging major foes. It would be beside our purpose to trace in detail the course of the four campaigns (1757-61) during which he fought for very existence. It is a story which has often been told, and by no one more dramatically than by the Scotsman, Thomas Carlyle. Suffice it to say, that in spite of the superb quality of his army, and in spite of the military genius which he displayed, he would undoubtedly have been crushed had it not been for two things—first, the aid given to him by Great Britain; secondly, a complete change in Russia's policy, due to the death of the Tsaritza Elizabeth in January 1762 and the accession of Peter III, who was a fervent admirer of the Prussian King. Even as it was, his kingdom suffered most

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frightfully in the course of this Seven Years War. By 1763 East Prussia had been devastated, and had been for four years in Russian occupation. Silesia had been overrun five times by Russian and Austrian armies. Berlin itself had been raided thrice. The fine Prussian army that began the war had been utterly exterminated, and its place had been taken (under pressure of merciless conscription) by recruits of very inferior quality. The government was bankrupt; the currency debased; the land laid waste; industry ruined; commerce extinguished. When in 1763 peace was made at Hubertsburg Frederick found himself solitary in the midst of smoking ruins.

Nevertheless, he had survived, and he emerged without the loss of a single acre of territory. The anti-Prussian coalition had failed, and its failure was due to (1) the withdrawal of Russia; (2) the exhaustion of Austria; (3) the increasing absorption of France in her maritime and colonial conflict with Great Britain. The salvation of Prussia in 1763, in fact, was primarily the work of Great Britain. She kept the French employed; she defended Hanover and so safeguarded Prussia's western frontier; she lavishly subsidised the bankrupt Prussian king, and so enabled him to hire the troops of other German princes. But for her help, he must have gone under. Neither in 1763, nor since, has Prussia adequately recognised her debt to Britain. Gratitude was not a characteristic of either Frederick the Great or his successors.

CHAPTER VI

THE REVOLUTIONARY AND NAPOLEONIC WARS

I

WITH the Peace of Hubertsburg (February 1763) Frederick the Great had finished with fighting. For the remaining twenty years of his reign he lived on his laurels, a sinister figure, hated and dreaded by his neighbours. The terror of his name and his notorious perfidy enabled him to dominate Central Europe as none had done since Wallenstein's time. Once, indeed, he actually took the field—in A.D. 1778, against his old enemies the Austrians—but the ‘war of nerves’ was enough. He got what he wanted without striking a blow.

His main concern was always his army. He had to remake it from the very foundations. He never rested until he had raised its numbers to 150,000, with provision for speedy expansion to 200,000—a prodigious drain on a total population of some 4,000,000. He tightened the already strict discipline; he improved the equipment; he trained it by frequent manœuvres; he kept it in a constant condition of war readiness. Into civil life, moreover, he introduced

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the military spirit and the practice of rigid regimentation. Freedom ceased to exist among his drilled and subjugated peoples. He converted the Prussian monarchy into a totalitarian autocracy. He was indeed the typical ‘despot’ of the eighteenth century.

It cannot be denied, however, that in many respects his despotism was ‘enlightened.’ He was in advance of his age in the matter of religious toleration : not himself believing in either heaven or hell, he allowed all his subjects to make their journey to whichever of the two they preferred in their own way. He vastly improved and liberalised education ; he introduced French culture and refinement to his boorish nobility ; he fostered, by drastic measures that caused much resentment, agriculture, industry, and commerce ; he opened up the country by new roads and canals ; he drained marshes and planted forests ; yet, with all his expenses, he exercised so close a control over finance that he left a large store of gold in his treasury—a reserve in view of the ‘next war,’ whenever it should come. That it would come, sooner or later, he had no doubt. He had made Prussia so serious a menace to the security of every other European state that he realised that she would certainly be extirpated unless she were constantly ready to defend herself. But defence was not by any means all that he thought of. Profitable aggressions were always in his mind. He persistently studied his neighbours with a view to possible con-

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quests. He, indeed, established war as Prussia's staple industry. His kingdom was a permanent armed camp.

His insecure position, and his consciousness of the ineradicable hostility of Austria, Saxony, and France, caused him to devote concentrated attention to foreign affairs. He realised that the most effective counterfoil to the enmity of Austria, Saxony, and France would be the friendship and alliance of Russia. And, fortunately for him, that friendship and that alliance were his for the asking. We have seen how the Tsar, Peter III, was his enthusiastic admirer, and how this opportune admiration relieved the pressure of the Seven Years War upon Prussia, and enabled Frederick to emerge unbeaten from the great struggle in A.D. 1763. Now Peter III was married to a German wife—Sophia of Anhalt-Zerbst, daughter of the Prussian and Lutheran governor of Stettin, thoughtfully provided for him by Frederick the Great himself. This extremely capable lady, on entering Russia and exchanging Prussian Lutheranism for Greek Orthodoxy, became the Grand Duchess 'Catharine' (A.D. 1744). Next year she married Peter. During the eighteen years of her apprenticeship she made herself a mistress of statecraft and an independent power in the Empire. More and more, however, she became alienated from her husband, who was indeed a person of feeble intellect and bestial habits. When he succeeded to the Tsardom in January 1762 he was actually contemplating a

divorce, for which he had ample grounds. Catharine, however, anticipated his action. In July of the same year she engineered a military *coup*; deposed and imprisoned the friendless and impossible Peter; and connived at his murder before the end of the month by the brothers Orloff, one of whom was her lover.

II

Frederick the Great, the eighteenth-century Hitler, and Catharine the Great, the female prototype of Stalin, understood one another perfectly. Both were Prussians. Frederick approved of the domestic purge, even though it had involved the extinction of his good, but unintelligent, friend Peter. He opened up a sparkling correspondence (in French) with his vivacious protégée, now the Empress of all the Russias, and in 1764 he concluded with her an intimate alliance.

The topic which particularly interested the two potentates was Poland. They agreed that that country was ripe for partitionment. For a long time its condition had been anarchic. Its constitution suffered from two deadly defects. On the one hand, its monarchy was elective, and every vacancy on the throne was the occasion of a faction-fight among the nobles, which increasingly tended to develop into a European war. On the other hand, its diet or parliament was subjected to an extra-

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ordinary convention (the so-called *liberum veto*) which required absolute unanimity for the passing of any measure. This, of course, reduced it to wrangling futility, and blocked the way to all reform.

The War of the Polish Succession (1733–38), which had embroiled a large part of the Continent, had resulted in the placing of a German, Augustus of Saxony, upon the Polish throne. His inglorious and ineffective reign, characterised by continual conflicts, came to an end in 1763. At once the old faction-fight broke out. One party, whose watch-word was rigid Catholic ascendancy, was supported by Austria and France. The other, supported by Orthodox Russia and Lutheran Prussia, demanded freedom of worship and political equality for the Greek and Protestant forms of Christianity. Russia and Prussia, of course, easily prevailed, and their candidate, Stanislaus Poniatowski, received the puppet-crown. His grant of civil and political rights to Greeks and Lutherans, however, caused the outbreak of a furious religious rebellion (1768) in which the Catholic party made the fatal and amazing mistake of calling in the Turks to its aid. Russia intervened and defeated both the rebels and their Ottoman allies, and so found herself in virtual command of Poland. Catharine would have liked formally to annex the whole of the anarchic kingdom and reduce it to Russian order; but she realised that her friend

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Frederick would not permit this. He had long had his eye on West Prussia, the 'Polish Corridor' that lay between his East Prussian kingdom and his



German electorate. Moreover, he did not wish to have his dear friend Catharine as his immediate neighbour on the east. So Catharine had to content herself for the moment with keeping Southern

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Livonia and the ‘Old Russian’ region lying east of the rivers Dvina and Dnieper—a matter of a mere two and a half million square miles. Frederick the Great, for his part, took over the long-coveted West Prussia, together with the little morsel of Ermeland which lay conveniently encircled by East Prussian territory (July 1772).

Maria Theresa of Austria viewed with much concern and deep disapproval this spoliation of a Catholic and friendly state by her Orthodox and Lutheran enemies; but she could do nothing to prevent it. She felt, however, that if Poland was being nibbled at, she must have her little bit. Catharine and Frederick thought it best to let her have it. So she took Galicia and Lodomeria as a solace to her wounded sensibilities. Like the Walrus and the Carpenter in the presence of the Oysters, she

wept like anything

as she contemplated Galicia and Lodomeria, to which she had not a shadow of a claim; nevertheless she devoured them.

III

Frederick, having occupied West Prussia and Ermeland, proceeded with great energy to develop and Germanise them. Writing to his brother Henry concerning his successful and bloodless aggression, he said: ‘It is a very good and a very profitable

acquisition, both for the political situation of the State and for its finances.' From the short point of view he was right: by confiscating ecclesiastical lands; by imposing a tax of 25 per cent. of their net revenues upon the nobility (subject to a discount if they turned Protestant); by regulating industry and commerce in the interest of the State, he was soon drawing an income of two million thalers a year from the new provinces. But he and his fellow-bandit had administered a shock to the public conscience of Europe more severe even than that caused by the rape of Silesia thirty years before. They had, moreover, roused among the Poles a passionate resentment and a sense of national unity that boded ill for the future peace of Europe. The final judgment of the civilised world upon this first partition of Poland has been excellently expressed by Sir John Marriott and Sir Charles Grant Robertson in their book on *The Evolution of Prussia*. They say of Frederick, in words which, though written long before Hitler was ever heard of, might without the change of a syllable be said of him and his actions in 1938-39:

His diplomacy was throughout a tissue of fraud and deceit, and the consummation of his designs was effected only by sheer force on an unwilling victim. The Partition was, and remains, a crime. It provided an odious precedent for the subsequent extinction of the Polish kingdom and of Polish nationality in blood

and flame, which it made inevitable; and it taught a world on the eve of revolution that *rois éclairés* differed from the footpad only in the magnitude of their greed, the scale of their operations, and the philosophical hypocrisy with which they sought to cover naked aggression (p. 153).

No sense of anything save satisfaction seems to have stirred the breasts of the two successful bandits as they assimilated their easy conquests in 1772. Indeed, since the appetite for aggression grows by what it feeds on, they at once began to discuss another possible piece of co-operative robbery. This time Sweden was to be the victim: Catharine was to take Finland; Frederick, Pomerania. Fortunately for the menaced Scandinavian kingdom, however, it happened that a young and vigorous monarch had just ascended her throne, Gustavus III (1771-92). He, having got wind of the conspiracy, speedily put his house in order, strengthened his defences, and challenged the prospective depredators to come on. Not knowing what Powers Sweden might have behind her, the would-be partitioners decided that discretion would, for the moment, be better than burglary.

Catharine of Russia, however, had by no means finished with Poland. There was a great deal more of it that she wanted; but the opportunity to get it did not come until after Frederick's death in 1786, and after the outbreak of the French Revolution in

1789. Then, in 1792, another rebellion and civil war—this time due to attempts on the part of King Stanislaus to effect political reforms—gave Russia and Prussia an excuse for a new invasion and appropriation. Austria had no share in this second partition of Poland (A.D. 1793). Russia took the bulk of Podlesia, Volhynia, Northern Podolia, and the Ukraine; Prussia annexed a large part of ‘Great Poland’ (Posen, etc.), thus linking up Silesia with East Prussia; she also annexed the valuable port of Danzig and the great fortress of Thorn. This frightful spoliation roused the unhappy Poles to a desperate resistance. They found an inspired leader in the noble patriot Kosciusko. But, of course, in such circumstances, resistance was hopelessly vain. Russia and Prussia soon made an end of the business. The rising was suppressed, and Poland entirely extinguished by a Third Partition (1795). Prussia took Masovia (of which Warsaw was the centre) and New East Prussia; Austria was allowed to round off Galicia and to incorporate Cracow; Russia mopped up all that was left, including Podlesia.

IV

The King of Prussia at the time of the second and third partitions of Poland was Frederick William II (1786–97), a nephew of the great Frederick. He was a man of very different character and calibre from

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his uncle. He was, indeed, a rather feeble creature, unskilled in either war or government, ignorant of affairs, and incapable of ruling men. He went far to fulfil a prophecy uttered by the notable Frenchman, Mirabeau, after a visit to the Court of Frederick the Great:

If ever a foolish prince ascends this throne we shall see the formidable giant suddenly collapse and Prussia will fall like Sweden.

The weakness of Frederick the Great's system of government, as of most dictatorships, was that it wholly depended upon the continued existence and efficiency of one mortal man. More than most dictators, indeed, Frederick had taken the control of every department of state into his own hands, and kept it there. He had reduced the officers of the army, the members of his privy council, the civil servants of his extensive bureaucracy, to mere automata obedient to his own imperious will. Individual initiative, independence of any sort, was abhorrent to him. So jealous was he of any rival authority that he had even kept his heir-presumptive in ignorance and idleness. Hence, when he died, the whole vast machinery of government tended to slow down and stand still for lack of motive power.

Frederick William II, son of a colourless younger brother of 'Old Fritz,' Augustus William by name, was in many ways more attractive than his eminent

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uncle. He was not so entirely desiccated. He loved food, wine, women, music, art, architecture. He was good-looking, fond of company, genial, convivial, 'gay and festive.' But he was weak of will, vacillating of purpose, easily led, hesitant, unbusiness-like. It was to be reckoned among his virtues that he loved his sister, Wilhelmina, who was married to William of Orange, Stadholder of Holland ; and that he adored his daughter, Frederica, whom he gave in marriage to the Duke of York, second son of George III of Great Britain. The consequences, however, of his commendable domestic affections were serious. For they diverted his foreign policy into channels that were not to the advantage of Prussia. Under the influence of his sister he became excessively nervous respecting the growing menace of French penetration in the Netherlands, both Dutch and Austrian (i.e. Holland and Belgium). This menace was grave under Louis XVI ; it was still more serious when the French Revolution overthrew the monarchy and substituted a republicanism which had many sympathisers in both the divisions of the Low Countries. The result was that the King of Prussia entered into two sets of engagements which Frederick the Great would have avoided as though they had been poison. The first was a Triple Alliance with the United Provinces and Great Britain to maintain the House of Orange in Holland (1788). The second was a series of treaties with the Emperor

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Leopold II (who succeeded his brother Joseph in 1790), in which he completely subordinated Prussian policy to that of Austria (1790-92).

The consequence of these injudicious undertakings was that when, in 1792, the French warmongers of the Gironde compelled the unhappy Louis XVI to declare war on Austria, Prussia found herself, much against her will, dragged in. Her half-hearted intervention in the Revolutionary War was disastrous both to Louis XVI and to herself. Her army still enjoyed the prestige which Frederick the Great had conferred upon it. It was regarded as the finest in Europe. When, therefore, 42,000 Prussians under the Duke of Brunswick (brother-in-law to King George III of Great Britain) crossed the Rhine, captured Verdun, and advanced to Valmy, the general opinion in Europe was that the doom of the French Revolutionaries was sealed. This opinion was confirmed by the terms of a manifesto which Brunswick issued. It may well have served as a model for the Hitler-Goebbels proclamations of more recent times. It breathed threatenings and slaughter against the French rebels; ordered them to submit to the authority of their lawful king; and announced that any injury inflicted upon either him or his family would be followed by the total destruction of Paris.

The manifesto was mere bluff. He had no intention of doing any serious fighting. All the same it was fatal to Louis XVI. The French were not cowed

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by the Prussian threats. On the contrary, they were moved to decisive action. On August 10th 1792 they deposed and imprisoned their king; in September proclaimed the Republic; and on January 21st 1793 sent the most innocent but least efficient of all the Bourbon monarchs to the guillotine. Meantime a rag-tag and bobtail mob, almost without experienced officers, and armed with any weapon they could lay hands on, had surged out of Paris to Valmy, and placed themselves in front of the Prussian artillery. If Brunswick had cared to run the risk of having a few of his men cut with scythes or pierced with pikes, he could have swept the rabble out of his path in an hour. But his main concern was to keep his army intact: it was wanted elsewhere. So he let off his cannons and made a big noise; but when he saw that the Revolutionists were not scared off, he went back home, leaving the French royal family to its fate.

V

The Prussian army was wanted on the eastern front. Poland was calling again. Catharine II of Russia was once more in active eruption. She had used all her art and craft to get Prussia and Austria thoroughly embroiled with France, and when she saw the Austrians heavily engaged in the Netherlands, and the Prussians in Lorraine, she pounced on

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Poland. Frederick William II, and still more his hoary councillors—his uncle Prince Henry, his foreign minister Count Haugwitz, and others—were much more anxious to be in at the kill in Poland than to be interfering with the killing in France. So, leaving the French mob to flatter itself into the belief that it had defeated the finest army in Europe, they massed their forces in the east, invaded Poland in January 1793, and compelled Catharine to let them share the loot. As we have seen, the Prussian portion in this second partition of Poland consisted of the major part of ‘Great Poland’ together with the long-coveted cities of Danzig and Thorn. Austria, by now thoroughly embroiled in the Netherlands—where she was meeting with heavy defeats at the hands of French invaders assisted by Belgian rebels—got nothing this time.

Austria justifiably felt that she had been treated with scandalous infidelity and extreme unfriendliness by Prussia in both the matter of the French war and the affair of the Polish partition. That feeling was accentuated when, in April 1795, Prussia abandoned her allies altogether, entered into separate negotiations with the French Republicans, and by the Treaty of Basel entirely withdrew from the war. In doing so she was committing a gross breach of faith, and by the terms of the treaty she basely betrayed into the hands of the enemy the smaller princes of the Rhineland. But to Frederick William II and

his ministers all treaties were but scraps of paper, and for them such a thing as international honour had no existence. They had behind them already in the nine years of their conduct of affairs a lurid record of engagements broken and treaties repudiated in respect of Sweden, Poland, Turkey, and Austria. If they had not betrayed Russia, it was only because they dared not. By 1795 they were universally hated and distrusted. All Europe realised that there was not in Prussia any government whose word could be relied on. Prussia was making for herself an isolation that was a sure precursor of destruction.

The main cause of Prussia's defection in 1795 was the same as that which had caused her to retreat from Valmy in 1792, namely, the partitionment of Poland. This time, as we have seen, the extinction of Poland was completed. Prussia got Warsaw and the region between the Boug and the Niemen. Austria was placated by Cracow and an enlargement of Galicia. Russia took the remainder.

VI

Austria at the end of 1795 was in no condition to insist on a larger share of the Polish booty. She was, indeed, in a very bad way. Entirely expelled from the Netherlands, unsupported by any allies except Sardinia (a broken reed) and Great Britain (a merely

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maritime power at this date), she had to face the immediate prospect of a threefold French attack upon the heart of her Empire. The French had by this time put their republican house into order; had established an efficient government under a Directory of Five (a genuine war-cabinet); had created great armies by means of the administrative genius of Lazare Nicolas Carnot, 'organiser of victory,' and had launched them forth inspired by high ideals of the Rights of Man, and impelled by the extreme necessity of finding something to eat elsewhere than in France. At the beginning of 1796 the Army of the Sambre and the Meuse, under Jourdan, ravaged the Palatinate; the Army of the Rhine and the Moselle, under Moreau, pressed through Bavaria towards Vienna; the Army of Italy, under the youthful and as yet almost unknown Napoleon Bonaparte, advanced through Savoy and the Lombard Plain towards the Tyrol and the Brenner Pass. The Austrian Archduke Charles, an extremely capable commander, it is true, checked the advances of Jourdan and Moreau; but Bonaparte, in the most sensational of all his campaigns, reduced Savoy in a fortnight; drove the Austrians out of Lombardy; overran the Papal States; annexed Venetia; and compelled the Emperor to sue for a peace which he dictated at Campo-Formio in 1797.

The withdrawal of Austria from the Revolutionary War—following the withdrawals from various

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causes of Prussia, Spain, Holland, and Sardinia—left Great Britain alone to face the might of rejuvenated France. For two years the amphibious duel was waged—a duel compared to a fight between an elephant and a whale, the one supreme on land, the other on the sea. It was marked by (1) a projected French invasion of the British Isles, frustrated by the British naval victories of St Vincent and Camperdown (1797); (2) a French expedition to Egypt and Syria under Bonaparte himself, rendered futile by Nelson's triumph at Aboukir Bay, and Sidney Smith's remarkable defence of Acre (1798-9).

While this strange conflict was going on, the British Prime Minister, the younger Pitt, was struggling to form a new Continental coalition to check the French advance, and in particular to expel the French from Italy. He succeeded in persuading Austria to try again. Prussia proved to be impervious to argument and appeal. Russia, however, joined in, and so did Naples, Portugal, and Turkey. The second coalition, however, turned out to be even more fragile and less effective than the first. It lasted only two years (1799-1801). Naples, Portugal, and Turkey did nothing; the Tsar Paul withdrew his Russians in a huff; the Austrian armies were beaten by Bonaparte at Marengo and by Moreau at Hohenlinden; Great Britain, in 1801, was left once more solitary to make an impermanent peace at Amiens in March 1802.

VII

The Prussia which refused to join the coalition of A.D. 1799 was no longer governed by Frederick William II. That voluptuous, superstitious, and thoroughly incompetent monarch had passed away two years previously, leaving his crown to his son, the third of the double name. Frederick William III (1797-1840) was a much more respectable person than his festive father. He was, indeed, a Christian gentleman, inheriting rather the culture and humanity of the smaller German states to which his mother (Louisa of Hesse-Darmstadt) belonged, than the militarism, brutality, and perfidy which now characterised Prussia. His excellent personal qualities, which would have made him an admirable Lutheran pastor, were confirmed and enhanced by the influence of his noble wife (Louisa of Mecklenburg-Strelitz), who was extremely good at the management of sewing-meetings and tea-fights. Neither of them, however, was of the slightest use in the rough-and-tumble politics of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic era, except as models of how to bear adversity with resignation and fortitude.

Louisa was the better man of the two. She had intellect as well as character and charm; but she was completely neutralised by the amiable inefficiency of her husband. He was unintelligent, narrow-minded, weak-willed, vacillating, yet obstinate and

intractable. He came to the throne, however, at a moment when the highest powers of statesmanship were called for. Scarcely one month previous to his accession, in the autumn of 1797, the Treaty of Campo-Formio had been dictated by Bonaparte to a prostrate Austria. By the terms of that treaty France was to acquire, *inter alia*, not only the Austrian Netherlands (Belgium), but also almost the whole of the Rhineland west of the great river. She was, indeed, to be placed in possession of the ancient frontiers of Roman Gaul—the Rhine, the Alps, and the Pyrenees; she was to realise the dreams of Louis XIV. The cession of the Rhine frontier to France of course involved an immense disturbance of hosts of German princes, great and small, not to mention bishops, abbots, and free cities. It was agreed in principle that those dispossessed of territory on the left bank of the Rhine should be compensated, as far as possible, by equivalents on the right side of the river. The problem of the removal and re-settlement of these evacuees was referred to a Congress of the Empire summoned to meet in the very week of Frederick William III's succession to the Prussian throne.

The Congress sat and wrangled for sixteen months under the cynical, supervising eye of Bonaparte. Austria came out of it seriously weakened. Prussia, on the other hand, reaped the reward of her withdrawal from the first coalition, and of her subsequent

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persistent neutrality (maintained for the whole of the ten years, 1795–1805). She lost, it is true, as the result of the Congress and of later adjustments (completed in 1803) about 1000 square miles of territory on the left bank of the Rhine; but she gained in compensation nearly 5000 square miles on the right bank, mainly at the expense of bishops and free cities—Münster, Hildesheim, Paderborn, Mühlhausen, Nordhausen, Goslar, Erfurt, and the outlying estates of the great electoral archbishopric of Mainz. The majority of the three hundred and sixty small German states were swallowed by their larger brethren.

Never had there been so great an upheaval in Germany since the time of the Thirty Years War. It was clear that the ‘Holy Roman Empire’ would have to be reconstituted. The task was taken up by a body of deputies which sat from August 1802 to February 1803. As the result of their labours, most of the remaining ecclesiastical territories were secularised; forty-two of the forty-eight Free Imperial Cities were absorbed; and the Electoral College was reformed. The Emperor Francis II, however, realised that the doom of his fantastic Empire was sealed: it remained the mere shadow of an ancient name. Hence, to safeguard his dignity, he assumed, on December 7th 1804, the hereditary title of ‘Emperor of Austria.’ Earlier the same year Bonaparte had proclaimed himself ‘Emperor of the

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French,' and on December 2nd had crowned himself in Paris, in the presence of Pope Pius VII, imported for the purpose. Less than two years later (August 6th 1806) Francis II renounced his Roman title, and the disintegration of Germany was complete.

VIII

Before these various changes in nomenclature took place, Europe found herself once more involved in war. The peace concluded at Amiens between Great Britain and France in March 1802 lasted less than fourteen months: in May 1803 the two countries again engaged. To Bonaparte the peace had never been more than a truce; but he had intended it to last rather longer than it actually did. He was not quite ready for the 'next war.' He had an immense lot to do, not merely in military preparation, but also in civil administration in France, and in peaceful expansion among the neighbouring peoples. The work that he did, in fact, during 1802 and in the following few years was colossal: it remains the supreme monument to his energy and genius. Within the borders of the now widely expanded France he framed a new constitution, centralising the government and restricting provincial autonomy; he restored the national finances, ruined by inflation; he effected a concordat with the outraged and despoiled Church; he reorganised

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public education ; he codified the law ; he carried through immense public works. His activities abroad were equally vast and far more sinister. In one form or another he virtually annexed the whole of the Netherlands, all North Italy, and Switzerland. When he sent a mission to the Levant, foreshadowing a French occupation of Egypt and the Ionian Islands, British protests and Napoleonic responses thereto became so violent that on May 17th 1803 the British Ambassador left Paris, and the war was renewed.

For two years Britain fought alone against the French Colossus, her main concern being to prevent a French invasion of England. The fear of invasion was finally laid to rest by Nelson at Trafalgar (October 1805). Meanwhile Pitt had been toiling to form a 'third coalition' against the European enemy. In April 1805 he effected an alliance with Russia, and in July with Austria. Prussia, assiduously courted, obstinately held aloof until too late, lured by a delusive promise of the gift of Hanover, of which Napoleon had taken possession. When the Prussian King discovered that the promise meant nothing, and when Napoleon had outraged his dignity by marching troops across his territory without permission, he came in (November 1805). But it was too late. Napoleon had already captured Ulm (October 20th) with an Austrian army of 80,000 men inside it; had advanced down the Danube to near Vienna, and was engaged in the movements

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that resulted in the decisive victory of Austerlitz over Austria and her Russian allies on December 2nd.

Poor Frederick William III, left alone on the Continent to face the fury of the irritated Napoleon, was in a painful situation. His twistings and turnings during the next six months were pathetic and ludicrous to behold. We cannot, however, spare space to follow them in detail. Napoleon played with him as a cat plays with a mouse that cannot get away. Finally, in the first week of October 1806, he invaded Prussia at the head of an army of 170,000 men. Frederick William put about the same number into the field, divided into two bodies, commanded the one by Prince Hohenlohe (aged sixty), and the other by the Duke of Brunswick (aged seventy-one). They were defeated simultaneously on October 14th, the first by Napoleon himself at Jena, the second by Davout at Auerstädt. The collapse of Prussia was immediate and complete. The great fortresses surrendered one by one almost without a blow. Berlin itself opened its gates, and Napoleon in person made a triumphal entry on October 27th. The Prussian king and queen fled, first to Königsberg, ultimately to Russia. The queen's remark upon the situation adequately sums it up: 'We have fallen asleep upon the laurels of Frederick the Great.'

CHAPTER VII

THE DANISH WAR

I

PRUSSIA, indeed, had become rotten in its conservatism. It had learned nothing since Frederick the Great had ceased to drill it. In particular, its army unintelligently maintained his traditions, and for the most part retained officers whom he had appointed, although they were now antiquated, lethargic, and devoid of initiative. In A.D. 1806 of its seven generals five had passed the limit of three-score years and ten. The only things in which they remained efficient were in brutally ill-treating their men, and in grossly insulting all civilians. When the French entered Berlin after Jena, they were welcomed as deliverers by an enslaved population.

Napoleon, having taken complete possession of the whole Prussian monarchy, before determining its fate proceeded to deal with Russia, the sole continental survivor of the Third Coalition. Early in the new year (1807) he entered Poland, where he was enthusiastically welcomed as an emancipator from the tyranny of the three eighteenth-century partitioners. The Poles flocked to his standard to

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the number of some 30,000 and accompanied him on his anti-Russian campaign. The Russians did not wait for invasion. They advanced into East Prussia and fought two great battles in the region south of Königsberg. The first, at Eylau (February 7th), was drawn; but in the second, at Friedland (June 14th), they were decisively defeated. The Tsar Alexander sued for peace, and Napoleon agreed to meet him. In order to ensure complete secrecy the meeting was arranged to take place on a raft moored in the middle of the frontier-river Niemen, near Tilsit (July 1807). Secrecy was indeed desirable, for the results of the meeting were startling and momentous. In several respects they suggest comparison with the results of the Moscow meeting of 1939 between Stalin and the representative of his fellow-dictator Hitler. For in each case they indicated a complete *volte face* on the part of one of the principals. The autocrat of All the Russias had hitherto exhausted the resources of both the Slavonic and the Romance languages in denunciation of the self-created pseudo-emperor of the French. Now, as soon as he had reached the raft and had established his equilibrium thereon, he greeted his former *bête noire* with cordiality, saying: 'I hate the English as much as you do.' To which welcome words Napoleon replied with much geniality: 'In that case peace is made.'

As a matter of fact much more than peace was

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made. For the Treaty of Tilsit (July 7th 1807) was an instrument not merely of pacification, but of active alliance. The two dictators, Alexander and Napoleon, agreed to divide Europe into two spheres of influence: the one was to have a free hand in the east, that is, to annex Finland (which he did in 1809), to coerce Sweden, to partition Turkey, to dominate the Lower Danube and the Black Sea. The other was to have a free hand in the west, that is, to establish a complete French ascendancy over Germany, Italy, the Spanish peninsula, the Netherlands, and Denmark. Only Britain stood in the way of the accomplishment of their designs, so they concerted measures for the destruction of Britain.

It is no part of our present business to tell how Britain escaped from the snares laid for her annihilation. What we have to note is what happened as the consequence of the Tilsit conspiracy to Germany in general and to Prussia in particular. Poor Prussia came out of the conference badly mutilated. Her long career of selfishness, violence, and fraud had left her friendless and isolated. Napoleon, indeed, wanted to extinguish her altogether, and hand over her territory to his brother, Jerome Bonaparte. Alexander, however, persuaded him to be content with about one half. (1) He took away all the Prussian lands west of the Elbe and gave them to Jerome; (2) he converted the bulk of the Polish

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lands seized by Prussia in the three partitions into the 'Grand Duchy of Warsaw' which he placed in the hands of his ally, the King of Saxony; (3) East Friesland was added to Louis Bonaparte's kingdom of Holland. That, however, was not all. Prussia was required to pay a huge war indemnity, and to maintain a French army of occupation until it was paid. Further, she was required to restrict her army in future to 42,000 men. Here, indeed, was a nemesis for the bullyings of the 'Soldier King'; for the depredations of Frederick the Great; and for the ceaseless tergiversations of the two Frederick Williams.

II

And how did Germany as a whole emerge from the Napoleonic melting-pot of A.D. 1797–1807? She was completely transformed, and in the transformation carried a long way towards the ultimate goal of unification. Indeed, if one were asked the question: To whom was the unification of Germany in the nineteenth century primarily due: one would have to reply: to Napoleon. First, as we have already noted, by means of the Congress of Rastatt (1797–99) and the Act of Mediation (1803) he secured, though indirectly, the extinction of nearly 200 of the 360 so-called 'states' of the Holy Roman Empire. Secondly, in 1806 he persuaded or compelled some sixteen of the remaining German rulers

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—including the Kings of Bavaria and Würtemberg, the Duke of Baden, and the Landgrave of Hesse-Darmstadt—to break away from the Holy Roman Empire and form a ‘Confederation of the Rhine’ under his own protection.* Thirdly, in 1807 he combined the bulk of the Prussian territories west of the Elbe with those of Brunswick and Hesse-Cassel to form for his brother Jerome a ‘Kingdom of Westphalia’ which was incorporated into the Confederation of the Rhine. Fourthly, in 1809 he once more defeated and despoiled Austria which—presuming on his preoccupation with the Peninsular War—had rashly challenged his ascendancy in Germany. The battle of Wagram (July 6th), in which Napoleon was assisted by the troops of the Confederation of the Rhine, shattered the Austrian forces, and the Treaty of Schönbrunn (October 14th) completed Austria’s humiliation. She lost large blocks of territory; she was compelled to dismantle her fortresses; she had to pay a large war indemnity; her army was limited to 150,000 men. Thus Austria was deposed from the headship of Germany. Her empire became increasingly non-Teutonic. She had to seek on the Danube compensation for her expulsion from the Rhine.

From 1809 to 1814 Germany—apart from the

* This act was the immediate cause of the Emperor Francis's renunciation of his Roman title already recorded. See above, p. 147.

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western section annexed by, and incorporated into, France—consisted of three, and only three, political units, and all of them were dominated by Napoleon. They were (1) the Kingdom of Prussia, whose capital Berlin, and whose fortresses, were occupied by French garrisons, pending the payment of the indemnity; (2) the Confederation of the Rhine, controlled by Jerome Bonaparte from Erfurt; (3) the Austrian Empire, defeated and discredited, wholly subservient to Napoleon's policy. Napoleon in 1810 still further strengthened his hold over Austria by marrying the Archduchess Marie Louise, daughter of the Emperor Francis II and great-niece of the murdered Queen Marie Antoinette. Germany was, indeed, unified!

III

Napoleon's control of Germany was far from being a mere formality. He mulcted her heavily for money, and he drew upon her mercilessly for men. He compelled her, moreover, to conform to his ruinous 'Continental System' by means of which he essayed to blockade the British Isles and close all the ports of Europe to British commerce. His oppressions, indeed, aroused at long last a genuine national spirit in that distracted land.

The crisis came in A.D. 1812 when Alexander of Russia broke away from his alliance with Napoleon, refused to enforce the 'Continental System,' and

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prepared to face a French invasion. Napoleon, for his part, made ready to complete the work begun at Friedland five years before. To Dresden in May he summoned the Emperor of Austria, the King of Prussia, and the puppet rulers of the Rhenish Confederation. He told them what to do. Austria was to guard his right flank with 30,000 men; Prussia his left with 20,000; the Confederation was to supply him with 147,000 for the actual campaign. When finally he set out for Moscow, of his army of 600,000 only one-third consisted of Frenchmen. The subject allies supplied the remaining two-thirds. On them, therefore, even more than upon the French, fell the horrors of the great retreat (October 19th–December 13th 1812).

When, in that awful winter, Napoleon and the 20,000 survivors of that fatal campaign crawled across the Niemen into East Prussia, problems of the first magnitude faced Alexander I of Russia, Frederick William III of Prussia, and Francis II of Austria. Alexander had to decide whether to rest content with having expelled the invader from his own territory, or to pursue him and try to drive him from Germany also? Mainly owing to the influence of the German Baron von Stein he determined to go forward. In January 1813 he occupied East Prussia. This placed poor Frederick William in a most anomalous situation. He was nominally the ally of Napoleon, and most of his fortresses were

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still in French hands. Should he resist Alexander, or should he join him? He could not make up his mind; but his people made it up for him. They spontaneously rose and welcomed the Russian deliverer. Soon Berlin and other big cities were cleared of their French garrisons. Napoleon withdrew into Saxony, where he managed in a marvellous manner to collect an army of 150,000 men. With this force he defeated the German nationalists at Lützen (May 2nd) and Bautzen (May 20th), and so secured a breathing space in his retreat.

In the summer of 1813 there was nothing that Napoleon desired so much as a truce in which to recover from the shattering blows of the Russian débâcle and the Prussian revolt. In these circumstances he welcomed an offer of mediation from his father-in-law, the Emperor Francis, who was guided in this crisis by the incomparably astute Metternich. Metternich drew up the terms of a suggested settlement which he knew Napoleon could not accept; terms which, as a matter of fact, Napoleon rejected with insult and fury. In words which express the convictions of all military dictators, he said: 'My reign will not outlast the day when I have ceased to be strong, and therefore to be feared.' His rejection of Metternich's terms gave Austria the excuse that she desired. She broke away from France and joined Russia and Prussia in the War of Liberation. Great Britain, of course, already at

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war with Napoleon in Spain, supported the coalition, providing, as usual, most of the money.

The great issue was joined at Leipzig in the tremendous three-days' 'Battle of the Nations' (October 16th-18th 1813) in which men from every European people, except the Turks, took part. In the end Napoleon was wholly defeated, owing largely to the exhaustion of his ammunition and to the defection of the German troops fighting on his side. As the result of this battle the French were cleared out of Germany, and the Confederation of the Rhine was dissolved. Next year (1814), while the British forced their way from Spain across the Pyrenees and invaded Southern France, the Russians, Prussians, and Austrians crossed the Rhine, drove Napoleon back on to Paris, and compelled him to abdicate (April 11th). He was relegated to the island of Elba. Next year, while the victorious Allies were still discussing at Vienna the terms of the resettlement of Europe, he staged a return. But the British under Wellington and the Prussians under Blücher terminated his 'hundred days' adventure at Waterloo (June 18th 1815).

IV

The Prussia which played so prominent a part in the War of Liberation (1813-15) was a very different Prussia from that which had been overthrown at

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Jena. She had passed through the furnace of fierce affliction, and had undergone a purification and regeneration that endured for half a century. She had become the leader in a national movement that sought, on the one hand, the unification of Germany, and, on the other hand, the development of democratic institutions. Her leadership was inevitable: it was, indeed, thrust upon her rather than assumed. For, since Austria had abdicated her headship, and since Saxony, Bavaria, Baden, and Würtemberg had all apostatised to Napoleon, there was no other possible leader. It is doubtful whether the Old Prussian party ever accepted with sincerity the new rôle of nationalism and democracy: it was too profoundly alien from its particularist and militarist traditions. But for the time it was discredited and weak. The regenerators of Prussia; the men who restored her fallen fortunes; the pioneers who put her in the forefront of the German national movement; the statesmen who controlled the weak will and the feeble intellect of Frederick William III, were men drawn from the little German states, where for long generations, in tranquillity and obscurity, literature and science, art and music, philosophy and religion had been cultivated.

In these little states, and particularly in those near the Rhine and the Danube, the civilising and fertilising influence of France and Italy had had time to soften the native barbarism of their inhabitants.

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And in all of them the genius of the Jews, who had been drawn to them by their religious tolerance, had flowered and fructified. Their tiny courts, which politically were ludicrous miniatures of Versailles, were centres of exotic culture. From these little states, ruthlessly mangled in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, came the leading re-makers of Prussia, the foremost apostles of German national unity. Baron Heinrich von Stein, *facile princeps*, was an imperial knight from the small Rhenish principality of Nassau; Hardenburg and Scharnhorst were Hanoverians; Gneisenau and Fichte came from Saxony; Arndt was a native of Rügen; Schiller of Würtemberg; Niebuhr was a Dane. Of all the front rank men in this Prussian *risorgimento* only one, Wilhelm von Humboldt, was a Prussian born.

Space fails me to tell, even in outline, of the regenerative work that they accomplished in the truncated Prussia that—thanks to the intercession of the Tsar—was allowed to survive the débâcle of 1806–07. Stein effected a social revolution, abolishing serfdom, reforming local government, establishing free trade in land, sweeping away privileges and monopolies; Scharnhorst and Gneisenau completely remodelled the army, converting it from a purely professional force consisting of tyrant officers and brutalised rank and file, into a nation in arms; Humboldt reorganised education from the base up to the newly founded University

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of Berlin ; Fichte inspired the intellectuals of the university with novel ideas respecting the authority of the State and the duty of citizens ; Arndt, Schiller, and others poured forth patriotic literature. Only Goethe held aloof, unmoved by this strange cult of democratic nationalism born of disaster and defeat.

V

The part which the regenerated Prussia played in the War of Liberation secured for her a prominent and influential place in the Conference which met at Vienna to rearrange Europe in 1814-15. On the whole she came out well, although she did not get all that she wanted. She did not secure much of her former Polish territories, because Russia demanded the 'Grand Duchy of Warsaw' and (since her troops already occupied it) got it, converting it into a 'Kingdom' of which the Tsar was *ex-officio* king. Again, she begged for the whole of Saxony, to compensate her for her losses in Poland, but she was allowed to take a fragment only. In the end she had to abandon all her Polish acquisitions under the second and third Partition Treaties except Posen and the two fortress-cities Danzig and Thorn ; but she received in compensation (1) Lower Pomerania ; (2) about one-third of Saxony, and (3) the extensive provinces of Westphalia and the Rhineland, including Cleves, Cologne, Aix-la-Chapelle, Bonn, Coblenz,

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and Trèves. The effect of these changes was, first, that Prussia became less Slavonic and more German than she had been at the beginning of the century; secondly, that her frontiers now marched with those of France, and that she thus became the 'guardian of the Rhine' on behalf of Germany; and, thirdly, that in the Rhineland she acquired a population that had for twenty years been incorporated in France and had become thoroughly imbued with the doctrines of the Revolution.

As the Vienna settlement made Prussia more German than she had been before, so it made Austria less so. She lost her Flemish and her Swabian lands, but received compensation in Venetia and Lombardy.

Even more difficult than the problem of territorial adjustment which the Vienna diplomatists had to solve was the problem of the reconstitution of Germany as a whole that faced them. They would have liked, as the simplest solution, to restore the 'Holy Roman Empire'; but Francis of Austria would not listen to the suggestion. They proposed next the establishment of a federation of all the surviving German states; but the princes, jealous of their independence, would not hear of it. Finally, they had to content themselves with the setting up of a mere confederation, that is, nothing more than a permanent alliance of sovereign independent states, with a body of diplomatic representatives per-

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manently in session at Frankfort on Main. Over this 'Diet' Austria was to provide the president. The Diet was an impotent body : it had no executive officers and its judgments were devoid of sanction.

The German Confederation or 'Bund' consisted of only thirty-nine states, so great had been the clearance effected by Napoleon. It was made up of six kingdoms (Austria, Prussia, Saxony, Bavaria, Hanover, Würtemberg), seven grand-duchies, eleven duchies, eleven principalities, and four free cities. It was a futile organisation from the first, owing partly to a constant struggle between Prussia and Austria for ascendancy, and partly to a resolute determination of the smaller powers not to be coerced by either of the two.

It will have been observed that in A.D. 1815 the term 'Prussia' acquired a denotation widely different from any it had ever had before. In fact, those who have followed the story lightly sketched in the preceding pages, and illustrated by the maps interspersed, cannot have failed to note with what bewildering frequency the lands ruled by the Hohenzollerns changed their character and their boundaries during the four centuries 1415-1815. A complete series of maps—not far short of a hundred in number—showing one by one all the additions and subtractions of territory made during that period has much the effect of a kaleidoscope or a set of dissolving views. In other words, it conveys

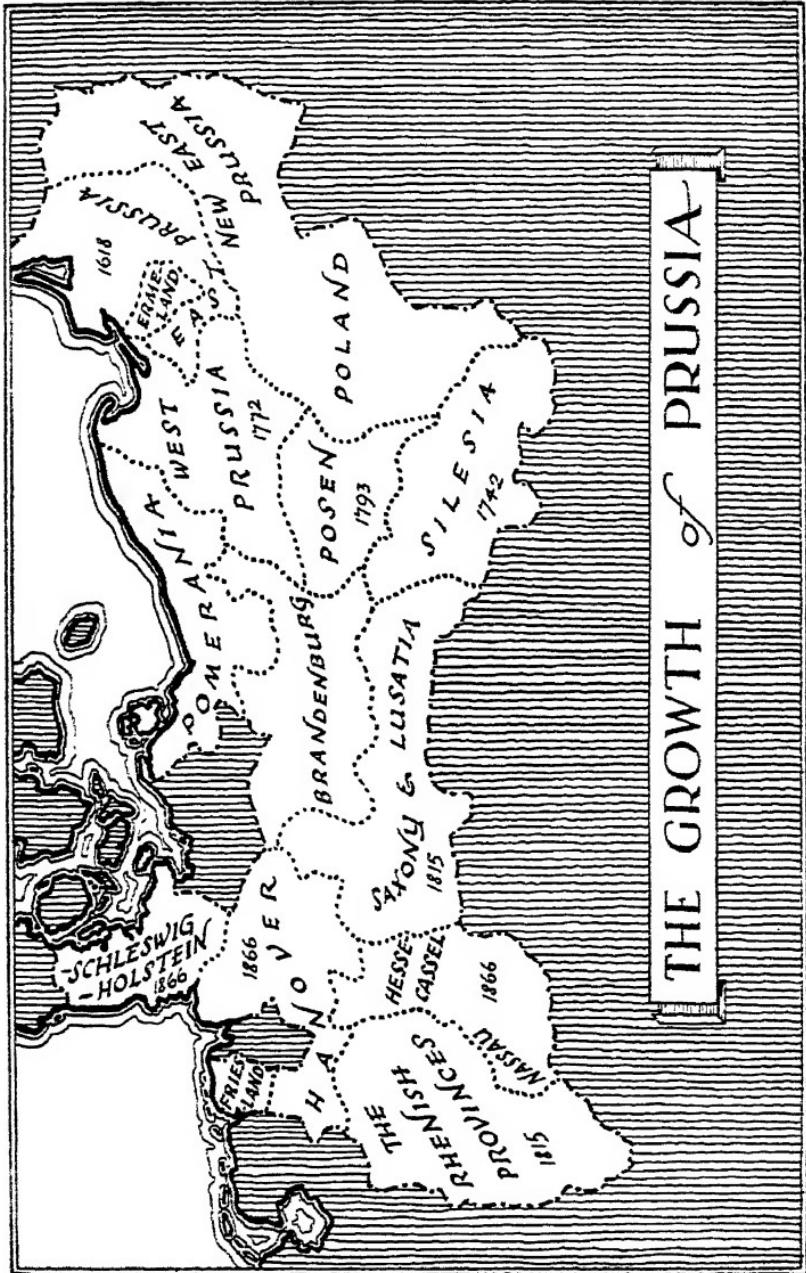
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the lesson that Prussia is an entirely artificial creation, inorganic and mechanical. It has no roots in nature, in history, or in geography. It is devoid of ethnical, cultural, or economic unity. It is a mere creation of political craft and military might, without justification on any rational principle. Nevertheless, after 1815 the possibility of a genuine vocation presented itself to its rulers, and men like Stein, Hardenberg, Fichte, and Hegel implored them to accept it. It was the call to take the lead in the unification of Germany, in the setting up of an effective constitution, in the extension to the manifold Germanic peoples of the institutions of democratic self-government. We must now see how Prussia lamentably failed to rise to the height of her vocation and her opportunities.

VI

The thirty years following the setting up of the Bund in Germany were marked by powerful and most hopeful movements toward national unity and popular government. These movements were specially strong in the smaller states, and particularly in Saxe-Weimar, whose grand-duke, Charles Augustus (1757-1828), the friend of Goethe, was a pioneer of German liberalism. Most of the states that had formed part of the Confederation of the Rhine received democratic constitutions before the end of

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1818. All over Germany, indeed, societies were established for the discussion of politics and religion, and for the spread of liberalism. The universities had their *Burschenschaften*, the cities their *Gymnasien*, every town and village its free debate and its uncontrolled press. This sudden spate of liberty in a country accustomed to serfdom and military discipline was not an unmixed blessing. It led, indeed, here and there to wild excesses both in word and deed, thus providing ample excuse for intervention and suppression by reactionaries.

The leader of reaction in Germany was the Austrian minister, Metternich. He realised that the recognition of the principle of national self-determination would be fatal to the Hapsburg empire, and that the principle of democracy was incompatible with the system of administration centred in Vienna. So by all means in his power—the Frankfort Diet, special conferences, international congresses, pressure on individual states—he set himself to stamp out what he called ‘the Revolution.’ Unfortunately he was able to carry Prussia with him in his campaign. He thoroughly scared poor Frederick William III, who after his painful experiences of 1805–15 was very much inclined to a policy of ‘safety first.’ Austria and Prussia together completely dominated the Diet, converting it into an agent of mere reaction. Since the Diet as such lacked executive power, these two agreed to act as its officers and to suppress

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liberalism throughout Germany. They coerced the minor princes; they purged the universities; they muzzled the press; they drove into exile persons (such as Karl Marx) who propounded doctrines antagonistic to the established order in Church and State.

The ‘Revolution,’ however, although thus repressed was not extinguished. In 1830 flames, kindled once again in Paris, burst forth in Brunswick, Hesse-Cassel, Hanover, and Saxony. They were soon put out by the Austro-Prussian fire-engines. Not so those that flared up in 1848. That was a year of a general upheaval—national and democratic—involving every European country except Russia, Belgium, and Great Britain.* Once again a revolution in Paris—the overthrow of the Orleanist monarchy in February—started the conflagration.

The effect throughout Germany of the February Revolution in France was prompt and prodigious. The demand for the calling of a German National Parliament elected by popular suffrage had for some time been insistent, more especially in the states bordering on France and Switzerland—Baden, Württemberg, Hesse-Darmstadt. It could no longer be denied. On March 13th Vienna rose in revolt, and Metternich had to make his exit unobtrusively from the city in a laundry cart, at the bottom of the family wash. Two days later Berlin followed suit,

* Even Great Britain had her Irish rebellion and her Chartist riots.

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and the King of Prussia, terror-stricken at the violence of the mob, surrendered to the demands of the rebels, donned their tricolour badge, and agreed to send representatives to a preliminary national assembly to be held at Frankfort at the end of the month. This assembly, known as the *Vorparlament*, made arrangements for the calling of the first general German National Parliament in May of the same year.

The German National Parliament was attended by representatives of all the thirty-nine states of the moribund Confederation. Unhappily, among those representatives were far too many professors lost in the clouds of the higher philosophy. Hence, instead of getting to the concrete business of constitution building, they spent the first four months of their precious time in discussing the abstract 'rights of the German people.' When they turned to practical matters they found themselves faced by the awkward problem whether or not to include in the new centralised State such non-German possessions of German rulers as Posen and East Prussia, Bohemia and Hungary. This problem proved to be insoluble. Closely akin to it was the question of the succession to the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein which fell vacant while the Parliament was sitting. Of that more anon. Finally, the matter of the form—whether republican or imperial—of the future German National Government came up for lengthy

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debate. This matter, unlike the others, *was* settled. On March 28th 1849 the King of Prussia was elected German Emperor.

VII

The Prussian king to whom the imperial crown was offered by the German National Parliament was no longer Frederick William III. That amiable but futile monarch had passed away in 1840, leaving his crown to his forty-five-year-old son, Frederick William IV (1840–61). The new king was a far abler man than his father, but his ability did not lie in the sphere of either politics or war. He was an elocutionist, a painter, a musician; he was interested in science, literature, religion. The main article of his creed was the dogma of the divine hereditary right of kings. Hence, when the offer of the German imperial crown reached him, he emphatically rejected it as coming from a body that had no power to confer it. He would not, he said, ‘pick up a crown out of the mud.’ He would not, moreover, outrage the Austrian Emperor by setting himself up as a rival. So, on April 21st he made *il gran rifiuto*.

Completely shattered by this unexpected and ‘great refusal’ of the Prussian king, the German National Parliament gradually lapsed into silence, unconsciousness, and coma. Finally it faded away into non-existence. For two years Prussia and

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Austria continued to wrangle in the constitutional empyrean. Finally Austria got her way. In 1851 the moribund Confederation of 1815 was revived and set up again as a puppet behind which Austria reasserted her ascendancy. For seven years Prussia, under its neurotic and dilettante king, lay at the feet of Austria in deep humiliation and impotence. Then, in 1858, the unstable mind of Frederick William IV finally tottered over, and his vagaries became such that he had to be conveyed to an asylum. His more robust and less emotional brother William was called in to act as regent, and with him came as unofficial adviser a man in whom he had come to place implicit trust, namely, Otto von Bismarck. In 1861 Frederick William IV died, not having recovered his reason, and William succeeded to the throne. In 1862 Bismarck was established as president of the Cabinet and minister for foreign affairs. A new era for Prussia, for Germany, for Europe had dawned.

VIII

Prussia's defeat and humiliation at the hands of Austria in respect of the German Constitution had simultaneously been paralleled by her defeat and humiliation in respect of the Schleswig-Holstein succession question already mentioned. Into the intricacies of that question we are fortunately not required here to enter. Few who enter them ever

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emerge in possession of their sanity. Suffice it to say (1) that the two duchies of Schleswig and Holstein had been annexed to the Danish Crown since A.D. 1460, but that they were administered separately; (2) that Holstein was a member of the Holy Roman Empire, but that Schleswig was not; (3) that the two were joined indissolubly; and (4) that both were held under the Salic Law which prohibited succession through females, but that Denmark was not so held. By A.D. 1848 it was evident that their duke, King Frederick VII of Denmark, would have no male heir. Hence he was persuaded to issue a new constitution abrogating the Salic Law and incorporating both the duchies fully into his kingdom.

This arbitrary act roused to wrath the German National Parliament, then in its loquacious youth, and it commissioned the King of Prussia to occupy both the duchies on its behalf. He joyfully dispatched an army under a capable general, Wrangel, and easily took possession. This facile aggression called forth strong protests from Austria, who was supported by Russia, Britain, France, and Sweden. In face of such opposition Prussia had to disgorge her prey (August 1848). Conferences of the Powers followed, and it was decided that the King of Denmark should continue to hold the duchies regardless of the Salic Law (1850). Prussia in vain protested. Holstein, however, in which Germanic sentiment was strong,

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refused to accept this settlement, rose in revolt, and again appealed for German national support. In order to prevent fresh Prussian intervention another conference was held in London (1852), which so far modified the decision of 1850 as to re-affirm Holstein's place in the German Confederation. This left the Danes dissatisfied, and constant friction marked the relations of Denmark and Germany during the following decade. Finally, in 1863, Frederick VII of Denmark died, leaving no male heir. Then the issue was raised. He was succeeded in Denmark by his second-cousin, Christian IX, whose daughter Alexandra had earlier that same year been married to Albert Edward, Prince of Wales. What would the duchies, and what would Germany do? Those were the questions that agitated Europe at the close of 1863.

The answers were not long delayed. For Otto von Bismarck was at the head of the Prussian foreign office, and he had made up his mind. Prussia was going to have both the duchies. She had not, of course, a shadow of claim to them; but she needed them.* They would give her a new and valuable access to both the Baltic and the North Sea. The vision of a Kiel Canal may even have flitted across his mind. Bismarck, however, realised

* Under the Salic Law the heir was the German Prince Frederick of Augustenburg. The Holsteiners proclaimed him; the Diet of the German Confederation recognised him; Bismarck ruthlessly pushed him aside.

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that he would have to move cautiously if he were to avoid a premature clash with Austria, who would certainly oppose a Prussian seizure; and also if he were to escape a European war; for he knew that Christian of Denmark had the warm sympathy of Great Britain, France, and Russia. He acted with consummate craft and skill. On the one hand, he persuaded Austria to join Prussia in maintaining the German cause against the Danes. On the other hand, he conveyed to the Danish Government the false information (which some injudicious words of Palmerston seemed to confirm) that if the Danes resisted they would certainly have the help of Britain, and probably of France and Russia. The Danes fell easily into the Bismarckian trap, and, trusting in help from outside, which had never been promised and which never came, they were speedily overwhelmed by the combined Austro-Prussian forces (Feb.-July 1864).

By the Treaty of Vienna (October 30th 1864) the King of Denmark transferred all his rights in Schleswig and Holstein to the Emperor of Austria and the King of Prussia jointly. These two potentates, then, had to decide what to do with their booty. Bismarck had already settled the matter in his own mind, but he could not say so. Hence increasingly acrimonious debates took place between Austrian and Prussian delegates, in which the Diet and various European Powers joined. Finally, when

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war (for which Bismarck and his fellow-conspirators were not yet ready) seemed imminent, a temporary compromise was reached by the Convention of Gastein (August 20th 1865): Schleswig was to be administered by Prussia; Holstein by Austria. Said Bismarck to his fellow-conspirators: 'We have papered over the cracks.'

CHAPTER VIII

THE AUSTRO-PRUSSIAN WAR

I

IN 1864 Otto von Bismarck was fairly in his stride. He felt himself to be master of events. He was immensely proud of his achievement in the defeat of Denmark and the conclusion of the compromise of Gastein. In later life he repeatedly declared that he regarded his labours in 1864 as alike the most onerous and the most triumphantly successful of his whole career. He had ousted Denmark from the duchies with the actual assistance of the deluded and infatuated Austria (his prime German enemy), and without the interference of either Britain or France (his two chief Continental opponents). That he was able to achieve this resounding triumph was due mainly to three circumstances, namely, (1) Austria's fear of the recurrence of the 'Revolution'; (2) Britain's alienation from Napoleon III of France, whose vagaries from 1860 onward made Anglo-French co-operation impossible; (3) the fact that he had behind him an obedient king and also a renewed and regenerated Prussia.

William I was already sixty years of age when he

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became regent for his demented brother, and sixty-four when in 1861 he succeeded him as monarch. Long before he had attained either office he had spoken of himself as an old man whose life's work was finished and whose sole remaining function was to sit aside and watch the performances of his children and grandchildren. Yet he was destined to reign as king and emperor for twenty-seven years, and to see in that time changes in Germany and Europe vaster and more momentous than even those that had occurred in the Napoleonic era. Nevertheless, although he was near the very centre of the shifting scene, in a certain sense he sat aside and merely saw things happen. For he was a simple soul, rather deaf and slightly blind, easily hoodwinked and deceived. He was a man sincerely pious, domestically affectionate, straightforward, truthful, honourable. Devoid of ideas and policies, he might have been specially created and ordained by a Prussian Providence to camouflage and conceal the Machiavellian wiles and violences of Bismarck. He was innocently unaware of what was going on, and what Bismarck was aiming at. He did in all good faith what he was told to do, and he repeated accurately and with conviction the stories that Bismarck conveyed through his ear-trumpet. Bismarck, for his part, was careful to confirm him in his high view of his kingship, and to strengthen his belief in the divine origin of Prussia's 'German mission.'

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II

The Prussia over which William I was called upon to rule was a very different state from that which had been dissolved when, at the age of nine, he had fled with his father and mother, after Jena, from Berlin to Königsberg. The intervening period of rather more than half a century had indeed seen a remarkable transformation. William's own share in the process had been but slight. He had, however, shown a keen interest in things military and in the art of war, so that Scharnhorst and Gneisenau had found in him a faithful disciple and staunch supporter. The political and economic remodelling of Prussia, effected by Stein and his colleagues, left him cold or hostile. He was temperamentally conservative and anti-democratic.

Nevertheless, the work of Stein and his colleagues was of primary importance. For it all tended to the unification of the Prussian monarchy and to the making of it ready to become the nucleus of a unified Germany. When the Prussian king and his ministers came to survey the dominions placed in their hands by the Congress of Vienna in 1815, they found them to consist of eight distinct provinces, each with its own government and its own peculiar institutions. They did not even geographically constitute a single block of territory, for the new Rhenish region was divided from Brandenburg by the wide

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plains of Hanover and Hesse. They differed in religion: Catholicism was dominant in Posen and the Rhineland; Lutheranism in the Mark. Racially, too, they varied much: the Slavonic element was ascendant in East Prussia and Poland; the Gallic element was strong in the lands bordering on France. The work of harmonising, unifying, and consolidating these eight disparate provinces was crowned when in 1847, for the first time, a meeting of all their Estates—a States-General, or United Provincial Diet (*Vereinigter Landtag*)—was summoned to Berlin.

The work of unification was further facilitated by the creation of a highly efficient central bureaucracy, controlled by a new Council of State set up in 1817. More and more were administrative and judicial functions removed from provincial authorities and concentrated in the hands of officials operating under the eyes of the king and his ministers in Berlin.

But the most remarkable and potent instrument of unification—whose influence soon extended far beyond the limits of the Prussian provinces—was the *Zollverein* or Customs Union. The statesmen of 1815 found that the industry and commerce of the composite Prussian state were seriously hampered by a complicated system of tariffs inherited from the eighteenth-century Mercantilists. In the various parts of the Prussian dominions, as determined by the Vienna treaties, there were no fewer than sixty-seven tariffs affecting 3800 categories of commodities.

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There was no freedom of trade even among the Prussian provinces themselves, and against the other states of the German Confederation the commercial barriers were formidable. Now the Prussian dominions, situated in the heart of Germany, touched no fewer than twenty-eight different states, and the frontiers extended altogether to a length of nearly 5000 miles. Moreover, within these Prussian dominions there were thirteen tiny enclaves with enormous names—such as Schwarzburg-Sondershausen—round which tariff-fences were maintained. It appeared to a number of Prussian economists, students of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, that it would be a good thing to establish freedom of trade, first, within the Prussian dominions themselves, and, secondly, in respect of these little enclaves. They found the ministers willing to listen to them, and accordingly in 1818 all internal customs-duties within the Prussian dominions were abolished, and in 1819 the tariff-fence round Schwarzburg-Sondershausen was taken down. The advantage of this removal of restrictions was soon so evident that other German states began to apply for admission to the Prussian *Zollverein*, and within the next three years half a dozen of Prussia's small neighbours, e.g. Weimar and Gotha, were allowed to enter the fold.

The Prussian experiment in free trade excited much interest in the other great states of the Confederation, and in 1828 efforts were made to organise a

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Bavarian *Zollverein* for South Germany, and a Saxon *Zollverein* for such of the North German states as did not wish to place themselves under the economic control of Prussia. These North German states included Hanover, Hesse, and Brunswick, as well as the free cities of Hamburg, Bremen, and Frankfort. A tariff war between the three rival customs-unions, however, soon indicated the desirability of amalgamation. The Bavarian organisation came to terms with the Prussian in 1829; Saxony merged itself in the Prussian system in 1833, and its separate *Zollverein* collapsed. Later accessions to the Prussian organisation included Baden in 1835 and Hanover in 1852.

By 1852, indeed, almost the whole of Germany had been admitted to membership of the Prussian Customs Union. Only Austria held aloof. At first she was contemptuous, and ignored the existence and the expansion of the *Zollverein*,

In majestic taciturnity
Refraining her illimitable scorn.

Shop-keeping was beneath her august notice. But she did not find it possible to maintain that attitude long after 1841. For in that year appeared a book—as important for Germany as Adam Smith's for England—namely Friedrich List's *National System of Political Economy*. It attacked and denounced the doctrine of free trade. Economic considerations, it argued, might, and indeed did, suggest that free

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trade was most conducive to the creation of wealth. But wealth was not everything, or even the most important of things. National strength was more important; and to make a nation strong and self-sufficient it must have not only commerce but also agriculture and industry fully developed. Germany was still dominantly agricultural. Her industries were far below those of England, France, America, and even Italy in development. Therefore German industries must be fostered by high protective tariffs.

List's principles appealed to the ministers who directed the policy of the Prussian *Zollverein*, and accordingly, while retaining freedom of trade within the limits of the Union, they erected lofty tariff-walls against those who were outside it. And among those outside the *Zollverein* Austria was easily first. Hence, concealing her contempt and pocketing her pride, she sought—or rather demanded—admission (1841). To her amazement it was refused: her tariff system was different from Prussia's and could not be harmonised with it; she wanted to bring with her into the Union her non-German territories, Slavonic, Magyar, and Italian; and Prussia could not contemplate their inclusion in this purely Germanic organisation. Refused admission, Austria strove with all her might to destroy the *Zollverein*; but it was too strong for her. Finally, in 1853, she yielded, and a seven-years' Austro-Prussian commercial treaty was concluded. In 1860, when the treaty was about

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to expire, Austria once more applied for admission, and once again met with a refusal. Behind the refusal was Bismarck, whose general attitude to Austria had by this time become clearly defined. About this date he paid a visit to London, and while he was there he made a surprisingly frank confession of his prospects and his programme to Benjamin Disraeli, in whom he found a congenial spirit.

'I shall soon be compelled,' he said, 'to undertake the leadership of the Prussian Government. My first care will be, with or without the help of Parliament, to reorganise the army. The King has rightly set himself this task. He cannot, however, carry it through with his present councillors. When the army has been brought to such a state as to command respect, then I will take the first opportunity to declare war upon Austria, burst asunder the German *Bund*, bring the middle and smaller states into subjection, and give Germany a national union under the leadership of Prussia.'*

If Bismarck had put this lucid pronouncement in a book instead of merely uttering it in conversation, the title of the book would probably, and most appropriately, have been *Mein Kampf*. Disraeli repeated the words of Bismarck to Count Vitzthum, the Saxon minister in London, adding the warning, 'Take care of that man! He means what he says.' †

* J. W. Headlam, *Bismarck*, p. 157; Buckle, *Life of Disraeli*, vol. iv. p. 341.

† Vitzthum, *St Petersburg and London*, vol. ii. p. 172.

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In the circumstances it is scarcely possible to suppose that the Austrian ministers were unaware of Bismarck's openly declared intentions. And yet, within a very few months, Austria was actually in alliance with Prussia, and combining with her to dismember Denmark, to flout the Diet of the Confederation, and to alienate Great Britain and France. Such imbecility can be accounted for only on the assumption—which seems to be confirmed by the events of A.D. 1933–39—that if a prominent politician wishes to deceive his enemies most completely, his best course is to tell the truth. Bismarck was out to do precisely what he told Disraeli at Baron Brunnow's reception in 1862 that he intended to do.

III

The seizure of Schleswig and Holstein by Prussia and Austria in 1864 was rightly regarded by European opinion as 'an act of high-handed violence and spoliation which the judgment of history will class as only secondary to the partition of Poland,' of which the same two predatory Germanic powers had been guilty.* Bismarck, however, was supremely indifferent both to contemporary public opinion and to the judgment of history. He despised the proletariat, hated democracy, loathed the loquacious

* Sir A. Malet, *The Overthrow of the Germanic Confederation by Prussia*, p. 29.

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leaders who rose like scum to its top. He was a very Prussian of the Prussians endowed with a double portion of the craft and violence of his tribe.

At the time of the rape of the duchies he was in his fiftieth year. Born in 1815, at the very height of the crisis caused by Napoleon's escape from Elba and his reappearance in France, he had been brought up in an atmosphere of war. His family was a military one, established in Brandenburg in the thirteenth century, two hundred years before the upstart Hohenzollerns arrived upon the scene. Bismarcks for a dozen generations had fought and suffered in the cause of the Mark. He himself was truculent and quarrelsome. His university career was academically undistinguished, but he made a name for himself for extreme insubordination and unruliness. He spent but little over twelve months at Göttingen (1832-33); but he is said in that time to have fought no fewer than twenty-six duels. He was, indeed, a big blustering bully; not devoid of the gangster sort of conviviality, but argumentative, opinionated, domineering.

After completing his education, such as it was—its most valuable element being an effective command of the French and English languages—he spent a few years in the public service, where his wild and erratic behaviour did not meet with approval. He and the bureaucracy, indeed, during that period became permanently estranged. He got his own back with

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vengeance when in later years he was supreme. In 1839, however, he was called home to help in the management of the family estates which had fallen into disorder. The portion of land which was placed under his care was the wide domain of Kniephof in Pomerania, and his energy and skill soon restored it to prosperity. But there again, his wild carouses, his frequent brawls, his amazing escapades, secured for him the name of ‘the mad Bismarck.’ In Pomerania in all probability he would have remained—the *Junker* in excelsis, enjoying but a brief notoriety—had it not been that he was summoned to attend that pioneer meeting of the Prussian States-General which Frederick William IV called to Berlin in 1847.

The States-General was a source of keen disappointment to the King: it did not vote him the money that he urgently needed, and for which alone he had summoned it; and further, it insisted on debating the rights of the Prussian peoples, and in demanding a written Constitution. The King finally dismissed it in anger, declaring that he ‘would never allow a sheet of paper to come between him and God.’ He ruled, he maintained, by divine right, as a viceregent of Heaven, and not as a representative of the people.

Bismarck was an enthusiastic advocate of this dogma of divine right, and he made a name for himself in the assembly by his vehement attacks upon

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the liberal and revolutionary doctrines proclaimed by the representatives of the Frenchified Rhineland provinces (which had been Prussian for only thirty-two years). His speeches won for him the grateful thanks of the harassed Frederick William, and the still more appreciative regard of the King's younger brother, William, destined to be his successor and the founder of the Prussianised German Empire.

In 1847 revolution was in the air, and, as we have seen, it burst forth spontaneously all over Europe during the following year. We have also observed how the unbalanced and ultimately insane Frederick William, in extreme terror at the violence of the Berlin mob, abjectly surrendered, donned the tricolour, granted the paper constitution which he had previously refused, and professed his willingness to see 'Prussia dissolved in Germany.' Bismarck was horrified. The very last thing that he was prepared to accept was the solution of Prussia. He had no interest in Germany as a whole: he was Prussian pure and simple. His passion was not for the unification of Germany, but for the aggrandisement of Prussia. He protested violently, not hesitating to use strong language even to the wretched Frederick William himself. He helped to form a reactionary party pledged to oppose the 'Revolution,' and he contributed fierce articles to its organ, the *New Prussian Gazette* (commonly known as the *Kreuz Zeitung*). He himself proposed the watchword of

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the party: 'No truck with the Revolution.' Finally the influence of the reactionaries—fortified by the news that in Austria, in Italy, in France, in Spain, everywhere the 'Revolution' was collapsing—brought Frederick William round again. He installed a conservative ministry; called in the army, and by its means cleared out the democratic Assembly. Bismarck, to everyone's surprise, was not included in the ministry. The King was frightened of him. He crossed out his name from the list submitted to him, adding the marginal comment: 'Bloody reactionary; reeks of gore; will be useful later.'

Although not in the ministry, Bismarck continued active in politics during the troubled years 1848–51. He strongly opposed the calling of the German National Parliament; he played a prominent part in persuading Frederick William to refuse to pick up the proffered imperial crown 'out of the mud'; he continued to oppose and denounce 'liberalism' generally. He rejoiced and triumphed when the National Parliament expired in contempt, and when the 1815 Confederation was resuscitated.

IV

The re-establishment of the Diet at Frankfort on Main in 1851 opened up a new phase in Bismarck's career. This return to the constitution of 1815, although agreeable to Bismarck, had not been in

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accordance with the official policy of Prussia. It implied a restoration of the Austrian ascendancy in Germany which was extremely unpleasant both to the King and to his ministers. At one time they had seemed likely to go to the length of war to oppose it. But they failed to get sufficient support in opposition from the other German states ; so, by the humiliating Convention of Olmütz (November 1850) they had been compelled to accept it. All the time, however, Bismarck had advocated the Austrian policy : he entirely agreed with the Austrian minister, Schwarzenberg, that the restoration of the Diet was the surest safeguard against the main peril to which all the German states were exposed, namely, the return of the ‘Revolution.’ Hence in respect of this matter he welcomed the Olmütz agreement.

His well-known attitude to the Confederal Diet made it natural that he should be appointed as one of the Prussian envoys to Frankfort in 1851. Thither he went, and there he remained until 1859. He went as a staunch friend of Austria ; he came away her convinced opponent. He was outraged by the arrogance and insolence of Count Thun, the Austrian president of the Diet ; he was disgusted by the selfish and underhand intrigues of the Austrian delegates ; above all, he soon perceived that the guiding principle of Schwarzenberg’s policy was the degradation of Prussia. He realised that sooner or later a life-or-death struggle between Austria and Prussia for

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dominance in Germany was inevitable, and he steered all his policy accordingly. ‘Not by speeches and resolutions of majorities are the mighty problems of the age to be solved, but by blood and iron.’

The leading line of Bismarck’s policy, which he more and more impressed upon the obtuse Government in Berlin, became : (1) to encourage the minor German states in their resistance to Austrian presumption and to get them to look to Prussia as their protector ; (2) to strengthen the economic bonds which bound the members of the *Zollverein* to Prussia, and to extend the limits of the Customs Union ; (3) to isolate Austria diplomatically in Europe. In pursuit of this last, all-important aim, Bismarck entered his proper sphere, namely, that of foreign affairs. Although still merely an envoy at Frankfort, he began to make his mark as an expert adviser of the King. At the time of the Crimean War he helped to keep Prussia neutral when the King was much disposed to join England and France in opposing Russia. He held that the fundamental principle of Prussian foreign policy should be friendship with Russia. He visited France, perceived the rottenness of the Third Empire, and detected in Napoleon himself ‘a great though concealed incompetence.’ When Napoleon in 1859 allied himself with Sardinia and (in return for the cession of Savoy and Nice) helped to drive the Austrians from Lombardy, Bismarck used all his powers of persuasion to prevent

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Prussia from going to Austria's assistance. The Emperor Francis Joseph never forgave him. And his wrath was still further kindled when he found him opposing Austria's admission to the Prussian *Zollverein* next year (1860).

V

By that time Frederick William IV was in his asylum; Prince William was regent; Bismarck himself was no longer at Frankfort. He had been promoted in 1859 to the embassy in St Petersburg, where he laboured to strengthen the bonds that linked Russia and Prussia together. He was already a *persona grata* with the Tsar Alexander II, thanks to his attitude towards the Crimean War. From St Petersburg he was transferred to Paris in the spring of 1862 in order that he might confirm his impressions of Napoleon III, and counteract any tendency that the shifty Emperor might display to favour Austria as against Prussia. In the autumn of the same year, however, William (who had become King of Prussia in 1861) recalled him to Berlin to become president of his cabinet and minister for foreign affairs. From that time onward until 1890, when William I's infatuated grandson dismissed him, he was never out of office.

The immediate cause that led King William to call the strong man to his side was that he was in-

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volved in a crucial conflict with the Liberal majority in his Diet. The subject of dispute was the army. William was first and foremost a soldier. He had been Regent when in 1859 the army had been mobilised on the Rhine frontier during the course of the Franco-Austrian War in Italy. Two things had specially struck him on that occasion. The first was that the army was not nearly so large or so well equipped as it might be ; the second was that, with all its defects, it had, without firing a shot, determined the issue of the war. The threat to France had caused Napoleon to pause in his Italian campaign and patch up a hasty peace with Francis Joseph. The refusal to come to the active help of Francis Joseph had compelled Austria to purchase peace at the price of Lombardy. If such things could be effected by means of an imperfect army, what might not be accomplished with a larger and more efficient one ? So in December 1859 he placed Albrecht von Roon in charge of the War Office to carry through the necessary reforms. These consisted mainly in (1) a large annual increase in the number of recruits conscripted—enough to create thirty-nine new regiments of infantry, and ten of cavalry ; (2) a lengthening of the term of compulsory service ; (3) a fusion of the militia (*Landwehr*) and the regular army ; (4) an improvement in discipline and modes of drill ; (5) a complete rearming with more modern and efficient weapons. The realisation of this big pro-

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gramme involved, of course, heavy expenditure, and it was in respect of the raising of money that the Regent and the Diet had come into conflict (1860). The struggle was at its height when (January 2nd 1861) the Regent became King. So fierce and acrimonious was the debate that when Bismarck arrived from Paris to assume office, he found William seated despondently in his palace at Potsdam with his abdication actually signed in front of him. The King predicted that very shortly both he himself and Bismarck would experience the fate of Charles I of England and the Earl of Strafford.

The parallel between the English situation in the sixteen-forties and the Prussian situation in the eighteen-sixties was, indeed, an exceedingly close one. Both were disputes concerning money between a monarch claiming to rule by divine right and an elected assembly claiming to represent the will of the people. The outcome of the two struggles, however, was totally different. In England the Parliament had prevailed and had laid firmly the foundations of present-day democracy. In Prussia the King, as guided by Bismarck, won the fight, and so established the basis on which was built the autocracy of William II and the dictatorship of Hitler. If we ask what were the causes that led to the royal triumph, the answer I think is, first, the difference between the weak and timorous Charles I who failed to support Strafford, and the strong and

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courageous William I who stood loyally behind Bismarck; secondly, the doctrinaire folly of the Prussian Diet, largely due to inexperience, compared with the sober wisdom of the English Parliament, based on many centuries of precedent; thirdly, the fact that William had behind him a standing army strong enough to suppress civilian riots, whereas Charles had not had such a force. Thus it came to pass that William and his minister ignored the refusal of the Diet, collected the money by arbitrary will, and carried through the enlargement, reorganisation, and rearming of the forces, in spite of liberal opposition and much popular clamour.

VI

The growing military might of Prussia enabled her to play a decisive part in the international politics of the 'sixties. In 1863, for instance, the Poles rose in revolt against the Russian Tsar, whose rule had become intolerably harsh and tyrannical. The sympathies of Austria were openly on the Polish side, still more so were the sympathies of the English and French Governments. Bismarck, however, entirely indifferent to Polish sufferings, eager only to keep on good terms with Russia, declared himself on the Tsar's side, and laid up for himself and for Prussia a valuable treasury of merit in St Petersburg by keeping the ring while Russia, unperturbed by

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the protests and appeals of Austrian, French, and British ministers, proceeded to crush with sanguinary thoroughness the Polish insurrection.

Next year the dispute between Denmark and Germany concerning the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, already described, came to a head. We have seen how the Prussian army, in strange and unnatural alliance with that of Austria, easily overran the duchies, invaded Denmark, and forced upon the conquered Danes the Treaty of Vienna (October 1864) whereby the Danish King surrendered to the two Powers all claim to either Schleswig or Holstein. We have also seen how, pending a final settlement, it was agreed that Austria should administer Holstein, Prussia Schleswig (1865).

Bismarck now, having accomplished with masterly craft his first great task as foreign minister, set himself to face the second, namely, the triple task (to be accomplished at a single operation) of securing both the duchies for Prussia; of shattering to pieces the German Confederation; and of expelling Austria altogether from the German system. It was a gigantic task, rendered all the more difficult because he found it hard to reconcile the conscience of his king to its achievement. His two chief accomplices were Albrecht von Roon, the war minister, and Count Helmuth von Moltke, chief of the Prussian general staff, a master of the art of war. His own part in the conspiracy was, on the one hand, to

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secure the complete diplomatic isolation of Austria, so that she would fight alone; and, on the other hand, to goad her to declare war at his own selected time, so that she would appear to the world to be the aggressor.

The diplomatic isolation of Austria was not difficult. Of Russia's benevolent neutrality he was already assured. From England, as governed either by the octogenarian Palmerston or by the verbose but ineffective Russell, he had nothing to hope or to fear. With Italy he secured an active alliance by the promise, in return for military and naval aid, of Venetia. France alone remained to be bamboozled, a delicate piece of work, since French interests were obviously menaced by any increase of Prussian power in Germany. In order to secure French acquiescence Bismarck sought and secured a personal interview with Napoleon III at Biarritz on September 30th 1865. His ostentatious cordiality, his flattering deference, his apparent frankness, completely deceived his predestined victim. What exactly transpired at the interview will probably never be known, for Bismarck took care to leave no scraps of paper behind. But evidently Bismarck secured a promise of French neutrality in the coming conflict by undertaking that if Prussia emerged victorious and gained accession of territory in Northern Germany, France should receive counterbalancing 'compensations' at the expense of (perhaps) Belgium, (perhaps) Luxembourg, (perhaps) the Rhenish principalities, (perhaps)

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Switzerland. Napoleon seems to have been content with vague assurances, because he regarded himself as master of the situation. He calculated that a war between Prussia and Austria would be a long one; that it would be evenly contested; that before it was over both sides would be exhausted; that Prussia would get the worst of it; and that in the end France would be able to intervene with decisive effect, dictating the terms of peace, and taking such 'compensations' as she might desire. *Dis aliter visum.*

Meantime Bismarck, having got Austria isolated and in the operating-theatre, had merely with the help of his Italian assistant to get her of her own motion to mount the table, under the illusion that she was the surgeon and they the patients. The story of the devices by which he, in conjunction with Italy, aggravated her beyond the limit of endurance, is a record of diabolically clever but entirely unscrupulous craft. By refusing to admit her to the *Zollverein*; by concluding a favourable commercial treaty with France; by ostentatiously encouraging Italy in her demand for Venetia; by supporting Russia in her subjugation of Poland—in these and many other ways he showed a persistent hostility to Austria. But the two things that ultimately achieved his purpose and precipitated the Austro-Prussian War were (1) his interference with Austria's administration of Holstein, and (2) his presentation of a scheme for the reorganisation of the German Confederation

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from which Austria would be excluded. Both sides began to mobilise. On April 26th 1866 Austria presented an ultimatum to Prussia demanding disarmament. The immediate outbreak of war was prevented—to Bismarck's deep disgust—by Napoleon's intervention with the proposal for a European Congress to discuss the points at issue.

Austria herself wrecked the project by laying down impossible conditions. On June 12th the mutual withdrawal of ambassadors indicated the approach of hostilities. Two days later the issue was made clear when the Diet of the Confederation held at Frankfort what was destined to be its last meeting. On the one side, Austria denounced the doings of Prussia in respect of Schleswig-Holstein, and demanded united action against her. On the other side, Prussia demanded the reform of the constitution of the Confederation, and announced that if the Austrian motion were passed she would regard every vote given in its support as a declaration of war upon Prussia. In spite of this threat, the Austrian motion was carried in the Diet by nine votes to six. Among the nine who voted on the Austrian side were Saxony, Hanover, and Hesse-Cassel. That was precisely what Bismarck desired; Hanover and Hesse in particular awkwardly separated Prussia's Rhenish provinces from the Mark. He wanted to annex them in Northern Germany almost as much as he wanted to expel Austria from Southern Germany.

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They both, in spite of their vote, professed, not unnaturally, an ardent wish to remain neutral in any war that might ensue. Bismarck would not hear of it. They were his predestined prey.

Everything on the Prussian side, indeed, was in the last stage of perfect preparation. Roon had brought the army to a high state of efficiency, and had armed it with a new weapon, the breech-loading 'needle-gun,' which could fire three shots to every one of the old-fashioned Austrian muzzle-loaders. Moltke in his office at Berlin had worked out a masterly plan of campaign. All through the campaign, too, he continued to direct operations by the newly invented telegraph from his office. Not till the decisive blow was to be struck did he leave his desk in order to be present at the grand finale of Sadowa.

The Northern States, however, were the first to feel the weight of the Prussian fist. Saxony was invaded on June 15th; Hanover on the 17th; Hesse on the 18th. Within a fortnight all three of them were conquered and annexed. Then Prussia concentrated her forces on Bohemia. Three armies, manœuvred with consummate skill, shattered the forces of the Austrians' southern allies, and then converging on the main Austrian army of 222,000 men stationed between Sadowa and Königgrätz pounded it to pieces (July 3rd 1866). By the end of the month the war was over. It had indeed been a *Blitzkrieg*. It had occupied just over six weeks.

CHAPTER IX

THE FRANCO-GERMAN WAR

I

THE conclusion of the fighting in the Austro-Prussian War marked the beginning of a complicated diplomatic campaign, the conduct of which called forth all the resources of Bismarck's political strategy. Napoleon III realised, when too late, that he, no less than the Emperor Francis Joseph, had been decisively defeated at Sadowa. All his calculations had proved to be wrong. French public opinion instantly realised that the triumph of Prussia in Germany portended the near approach of new and deadly danger to France. Napoleon himself felt that if he were to escape severe and well-justified condemnation—and possible deposition—as a hopeless incompetent, he must make some immediate move to restore his prestige and display his influence. The Austrian Empire came to his assistance by imploring him to act as mediator, and by handing over to him the rich prize of Venetia to be disposed of as he thought fit. Thus fortified, only two days after Sadowa, he sent a telegram to the King of Prussia, offering his services, with an implied threat that if they

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were not accepted he would enter the field on the Austrian side. William I, at Bismarck's dictation, expressed cordial thanks for the kindly offer of the French Emperor, gratefully accepted it, and asked to be furnished with particulars of his proposed settlement.

That started a correspondence which Bismarck felt himself able to keep going for any length of time that might be desirable. In particular, he wished to know what 'compensations' Napoleon would like to receive in return for his consent to the enlargement of Prussia in North Germany. There was nothing that Napoleon was more ready to discuss, and in the process of negotiation, Bismarck got him (in writing) to express his willingness to accept the Bavarian Palatinate, the Archbishopric of Mainz, the Saar Valley, Landau, Luxemburg, Belgium. Bismarck took care to commit himself to nothing; but he carefully filed the correspondence for use at a future date.

Napoleon's menacing intervention made Bismarck realise the extreme desirability of a speedy settlement with Austria direct. He realised this all the more keenly when the Tsar Alexander II appeared upon the scene with a proposal that the resettlement of Germany, which involved a revision of the Treaties of Vienna, should be brought for consideration before a European Congress. Now Bismarck dreaded a European Congress even more than he dreaded

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French mediation. So all things conspired to make him wish to come to terms with Austria quickly. Fortunately, the things that he demanded from Austria were few and simple: (1) she must recognise the dissolution of the Confederation of 1815, and must consent to see a new organisation of Germany in which she had no place; (2) she must agree to the cession of Venetia to Italy. The amazing leniency of these terms not only astonished Austria and the world generally, but also grossly offended King William and the Prussian military leaders. Was this all that Prussia was to get from a victory that placed all Germany at her feet? The soldiers wanted to enjoy a triumphal entry into Vienna; the politicians demanded extensive annexations of territory at the expense of Austria, Bavaria, and Saxony; the financiers lusted for large indemnities. Bismarck resisted their clamours, and on August 23rd concluded with Austria the extremely moderate Treaty of Prague. Napoleon was left to continue his writing of letters, to which Bismarck soon ceased to reply. The Tsar was politely informed that there was nothing for a European Congress to discuss.

With an Austria that was no longer a state of Germany Bismarck had no sort of quarrel. He realised, in fact, that in the struggle with France which he already clearly envisaged, her neutrality would be essential, even if an actual alliance were not possible. With the South German states, moreover

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—Bavaria, Baden, Würtemberg, Hesse-Darmstadt—for the same reason, he wished to be on good terms. They were all disposed to gravitate toward France in dread of Prussian domination. But Bismarck assured them that he had no desire to interfere with them, and he showed them in confidence the letters of Napoleon which made it appear that but for Prussian protection they would have been dismembered.

Bismarck's ambitions, indeed, were for the moment limited to North Germany, that is to say, the region lying north of the River Main. This he was determined to bring entirely under Prussian control. First, he completely absorbed into Prussia the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, the kingdom of Hanover, the electorate of Hesse, and the free city of Frankfort on Main; secondly, he created a new Federal State, called the North German Confederation, consisting of all the states north of the Main. He himself framed its constitution, which was so formulated as to give supreme control to Prussia, and within Prussia to leave all substantial and ultimate power in the hands of the Chancellor, that is, Bismarck himself. In all but name he was for the ensuing quarter-century a dictator.

While Bismarck was thus reorganising Northern Germany, Francis Joseph of Austria was trying to set his shattered house in order. Various schemes were proposed for the reconstitution of the Hapsburg

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monarchy. Finally Austria took Hungary into equal partnership, and the two of them agreed to keep in subjection the Slavonic and Romance peoples who dwelt within the borders of their Dual Monarchy (1867).

II

Napoleon III never recovered from the blows that his prestige had received in 1866. He had suffered a diplomatic defeat hardly less damaging to his reputation than the military defeat that had humiliated Francis Joseph at Sadowa. This reverse, moreover, was only one of a series of failures that had marked his adventures since 1860, at which date—thanks to his triumphs over Russia in 1856 and Austria in 1859—his power and his fame had reached their apogee. In 1863 his efforts on behalf of Poland had been wholly futile. In 1864 his openly avowed sympathy for Denmark had done nothing to prevent the loss of her duchies. From 1864 to 1867 a French army in Mexico fought to maintain on an unstable throne a *protégé* of Napoleon, the ‘Emperor Maximilian’: in the latter year the United States commanded the French to withdraw. They had to go; they went; and their puppet Emperor was caught and shot. Such a succession of rebuffs and disasters shook the ill-founded French Empire to its base. It was widely felt both at the Napoleonic Court and among the leading ministers that nothing

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but a triumphant war could restore the tottering fabric of the régime. In other words, after 1867, a number of important people—including the Empress Eugénie—wanted a war at any price.

The war party in France played into Bismarck's hands most perfectly. For to Bismarck, after his defeat of Austria, a war with France lay 'in the logic of history.' He was now bent on completing the dominance of Prussia in Germany by bringing under her control the four southern states that still retained and cherished their independence—Bavaria, Baden, Würtemberg, and Hesse-Darmstadt. And he realised, on the one hand, that to attempt to subjugate them would at once precipitate a war with France which was already alarmed and belligerent; and on the other hand, that the best way to cause them voluntarily to seek the shelter of the Prussian power would be to frighten them with the bogey of a new Napoleonic conquest. So, having revealed to them the correspondence of 1866, he persuaded them all to conclude military conventions with his North German Confederation. Further, he increased their amiability and sense of security by admitting them to a German Tariff Parliament in 1867, and by allowing them many privileges in their dealings with the Prussian *Zollverein*. Long before 1870 he felt a confidence, which the event justified, that in a Franco-Prussian war, France would find no allies in South Germany.

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Two other tasks remained to be accomplished. First, he had to make sure that in the impending conflict France would have no allies among the Great Powers; secondly, he had to find means to provoke France to declare war, and so proclaim herself to the world as the aggressor. To these tasks he addressed himself with all his consummate craft and unscrupulous skill.

The isolation of France required the neutrality, benevolent or otherwise, of Britain, Austria, Russia, and Italy. For Britain Bismarck had supreme contempt: he disliked her institutions, he hated her Queen, and still more the Queen's daughter, the Crown Princess of Prussia; he despised her ministers, in particular her premier, 'Professor' Gladstone, and her foreign secretary, the feeble and muddle-headed Granville. He did not bother about Britain: he knew that from her—vacillating, divided, slow-moving, ill-armed—he had nothing either to hope or to fear. Austria was another matter. He had done his best to conciliate her since he had expelled her from Germany; but he knew that her humiliation rankled, and he also knew that Napoleon was eagerly seeking an alliance with her. He managed, however, to win her over to neutrality by playing on her fear of a revolt of her numerous Slavonic subjects in the event of a French victory over Germany. Russia was already well disposed to Prussia by reason of her attitude in the Crimean

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War and in the Polish insurrection. Bismarck confirmed her friendship by promising Prussian support if she wished to repudiate the restrictive Black Sea clauses of the Treaty of Paris (1856). Italy was easily secured; for what Italy wanted above all things, in order to complete her kingdom, was possession of Rome. And Rome was held by the Pope and was protected against all the enemies of the Papacy by a French garrison. If Italy would ally herself with Prussia, and assist in defeating France, the Papal States (including Rome) should be her share of the booty. Thus by 1870 France was isolated and was ready to be operated upon.

Then arose the problem of how to lure her to her doom. The problem, unfortunately, did not prove a very difficult one to solve. For, as we have seen, there was an influential party in Paris —led by the Empress and the minister for foreign affairs, the Duke of Gramont—that had come to the conclusion that a war was necessary in order to distract the attention of the French nation from domestic troubles, and to save the discredited dynasty from deposition. Hence very little provocation was required to lead them to take the irrevocable step. The slight necessary provocation was more than amply supplied by the famous Hohenzollern candidature for the vacant throne of Spain (July 1870).

III

In September 1868 the throne of Spain had become vacant through the enforced abdication of the tyrannous and scandalous Queen Isabella. The Cortes was summoned to determine the form of government that should be set up, and by a large majority it decided in favour of constitutional monarchy (May 1869). The question then arose: To whom should the thorny and muddy crown be offered? It presented few attractions, and it presaged extreme discomfort to its wearer. Half a dozen princes were sounded—Italian, Portuguese, Orleanist, German—but they all with one accord made excuse. The Spanish constitutionalists in search of a king became the laughing-stock of Europe. At length a whisper, apparently originating in Berlin, suggested the name of Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, younger brother of the Charles who in 1866 had been elected Prince (later King) of Rumania. The suggestion was eagerly accepted by the desperate Spaniards, and Prince Leopold was duly asked to take pity on a country lapsing into anarchy.

He carefully considered the invitation, but in the end emphatically declined it. He discovered not only that the office of King of Spain was in itself undesirable, but also that his acceptance would be regarded by the French as a direct challenge to

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war. Bismarck, who wanted nothing so much as to embroil France and Spain in war, was much annoyed by Leopold's refusal, and through a secret agent—Herr von Werther, Prussian ambassador in Vienna—he brought strong pressure to bear not only on the prince himself but also on his Roumanian brother, to reconsider the matter. The interests of Prussia and of the Hohenzollern family, he said, were deeply concerned. He wanted France to be hemmed in by Hohenzollerns. Once more the prince, devoted though he was to the family and the fatherland, declined. Bismarck, however, did not despair. Still acting in profound secrecy, and keeping entirely out of sight, he caused the Spaniards to send an official mission to Berlin to press the invitation for a third time not only upon the prince himself, but also upon the King of Prussia, head of the Hohenzollern House.

The matter was debated in a secret conference in Berlin on March 15th 1870, at which were present, beside Prince Leopold and his father, the King of Prussia, the Crown Prince, Bismarck, Moltke, Roon, and three or four other leading ministers. The old King of Prussia was doubtful, dreading the consequences of Leopold's acceptance; but the rest of the conference was unanimous. Their verdict was that his acceptance was 'a patriotic duty to Prussia.' Still the prince hesitated and held out. But Bismarck was not to be denied. He won over the old king;

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he brought extreme pressure to bear on the prince, telling him that 'he ought to put aside all scruples and accept in the interests of Prussia.' Finally, he wore down his resistance, and in June the subjugated but far from happy Leopold wrote to the King of Prussia saying that 'he accepted the crown which had been offered to him, since he thereby hoped to do a great service to his Fatherland.'

The announcement of Leopold's acceptance, made at the beginning of July 1870, caused an immediate explosion. France was in a ferment. Napoleon had not been consulted. French susceptibilities had been entirely ignored. The whole affair had been carried through so secretly that there was obviously a malevolent intention behind it. France could not possibly permit a third Hohenzollern throne to be set up in Europe, and one so near to her frontiers. In case of war she would be encircled by Prussians.

So great was the outcry in France, and so strong the protest of the French ambassadors in both Madrid and Berlin, that Prince Leopold—who had yielded to Bismarck with great reluctance—joyfully withdrew his acceptance on July 12th, and returned to repose. King William, whose conscience troubled him, confessed that for him, too, Leopold's renunciation 'removed a load of stone from his heart.' The attitude of the Prussian Government was one of sublime ignorance, innocence, and indifference. Bismarck himself, concealing his rage and dis-

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appointment, said : ‘The matter has nothing to do with Prussia. The Prussian Government has always considered and treated the affair as one in which Spain and the selected candidate are alone concerned.’ Similarly, the Prussian Under-Secretary for foreign affairs, who had been present at the secret conference four months before, said to the French *chargé d'affaires*: ‘The Prussian Government is absolutely ignorant of the matter: it does not exist for them.’ The King of Prussia, too, took up the position, with entire honesty, that the business had been a mere family concern with which, as King, he had nothing to do.

The world was not deceived. Secret and subterranean as had been the whole conspiracy, it was universally felt that Bismarck was at the back of it, and that Bismarck had for the first time been beaten. Bismarck himself, of course, realised this fact more vividly than anyone else, and he actually contemplated an early resignation. France had, indeed, scored a resounding diplomatic victory. A prudent French ministry would have been more than content to let the matter rest at that point. Nothing more was needed. Bismarck, having ostentatiously asserted that the Hohenzollern candidature was no concern of the Prussian Government, could not display the fury that raged in his heart at Leopold’s withdrawal. Gramont, however, was not content to let well alone. He saw an opportunity to add to the blow

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of diplomatic defeat the sting of personal humiliation. Taking Bismarck at his word, and professing to believe that Leopold's candidature had been purely a Hohenzollern family affair, he instructed Benedetti, the French ambassador in Berlin, to pay a personal visit to William, at that time taking the waters at Ems, and require him (1) to confirm the truth of Leopold's withdrawal and give an assurance that it had his approval; and (2) to add an undertaking that in no circumstances would he allow his candidature to be resumed.

Circumstances seemed to favour Benedetti. He met the King walking on the promenade. William recognised him, beckoned to him, and himself introduced the delicate subject by showing a copy of the *Cologne Gazette* which contained an announcement of the prince's renunciation. He was evidently relieved by the news. He had realised the danger of trouble with France. He did not want a war with France, and he conversed with Benedetti in an exceptionally friendly manner. He had no difficulty in assuring the French ambassador privately and informally that he was glad that the awkward business was finished; but when the ambassador pressed his second demand he bridled up and gave an emphatic, although entirely polite, refusal. He declared the discussion closed and said good-bye. He could not give a pledge so derogatory to his dignity. Further information having reached Ems,

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Benedetti twice sought to reopen the question ; but the King with increasing annoyance refused to see him on the matter. Nevertheless, there was no breach of courtesy, and when the King left Ems a few days later he received Benedetti with conspicuous friendliness when he came to the station to say farewell.

Unfortunately, the King had communicated the gist of his conversation with Benedetti by telegram to Bismarck, and authorised him to make such use of the information as he should think fit. The telegram reached Bismarck as he was dining with Moltke and Roon in Berlin on the evening of July 13th. They were all in deep depression, realising that their conspiracy had apparently failed. They were not going to get either a war between France and Spain, or a war between France and Germany. The telegram, however, revived their spirits and restored their hopes. They decided to publish it, in a judiciously abbreviated form, in a special edition of the *North German Gazette*, and also to send copies of it to all German embassies and legations. Bismarck's abbreviation was deliberately made so as to render the communication as provocative as possible. When he had read his perversion to the two soldiers, Moltke joyously remarked that he had, by merely omitting the mollifications and altering the emphasis, changed the message from a *chamade* to a *fanfare* ; from an

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apology to a challenge; from an order to retreat to a summons to charge.*

The revised version was framed and published with the full knowledge that, in the inflamed state of both German and French public opinion, it would make war inevitable. It was framed and published for the express purpose of making war inevitable. Before sending it forth Bismarck carefully enquired of his companions if they were ready for any and every emergency. They replied that they were. They had, indeed, for four years been preparing for nothing else. It had been a gigantic task to bring the composite forces of the North German Confederation up to the Prussian standard of efficiency and armament; but Roon had accomplished it. As for Moltke, all his plans of campaign were complete. Since 1866 he had himself tramped on foot the whole length of the Franco-German frontier, and had determined in detail the lines of the German advance. In 1867 he had visited Paris, together with William I and Bismarck, as the guest of the French Government at the opening of the great International Exhibition of that year. He had used the occasion to take long solitary walks round the environs of the city, in order to select the best sites from which in a siege it could be bombarded. Nothing had been left to chance.

* The full text both of the original Ems telegram and of Bismarck's abbreviated version will be found (translated) in Grant Robertson's *Bismarck*, pp. 496-97.

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The garbled telegram then was published, and it was accompanied by inspired comments calculated to intensify its effect. As was expected and intended, it roused both the Prussians and the French to patriotic fury. The Prussians were exasperated by the alleged outrage to their king; the French by the apparent insult to their ambassador. The French Cabinet was swept off its feet by the outburst of popular passion in Paris: on the evening of July 14th it signed the declaration of war. Next day King William ordered the mobilisation of the forces of the North German Confederation. In vain did the British Ministry offer mediation (July 17th). Both sides lusted for combat. Bismarck had precipitated the war: Napoleon III had been lured into declaring it.

IV

The German mobilisation during the second half of July 1870 proceeded with clockwork precision. Three great armies were assembled. The first, under General Karl von Steinmetz, 102,000 strong, was concentrated at Coblenz for a march up the Moselle valley. The second, consisting of nearly 250,000 men, under Prince Frederick Charles, was collected round Mainz for an advance through the Palatinate. The two armies ultimately were to combine for the capture of Metz and the consequent conquest of Lorraine. The third army, commanded by the

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Crown Prince, and consisting of 220,000 men, assembled at Mannheim, where the Neckar joins the Rhine. Its task was twofold: first, to fall upon any French army that should attempt an invasion of Southern Germany; secondly, to advance into Alsace and capture Strasburg, which Bismarck was determined to secure for Germany. ‘It is the key of our house,’ he said, ‘and we must have it.’

The idea that Metz and Strasburg were in danger did not at first occur to any of the French strategists. Offence, not defence, filled their minds. They had planned, indeed, precisely that invasion of Southern Germany which the third German army was set to prevent. For the purpose of that invasion Napoleon had planned a concentration of 150,000 men at Metz and another 100,000 at Strasburg. Although he had no sort of agreement with the South German states, he confidently expected that when he appeared in force in either the Bavarian Palatinate, the Grand-duchy of Baden, or the kingdom of Würtemberg, the notorious anti-Prussianism of their inhabitants would lead them to throw in their lot with France. Similarly, and even more confidently, he hoped that in the same circumstances Austria and Italy—with whose rulers he had had much fraternal correspondence during the summer—would join him in considerable force. He expected, too, useful assistance, by way of diversion, from Denmark in the north. He envisaged within the course of a few weeks or

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months a vast combined movement on Berlin—French, South German, Austrian, Italian, Danish—and a triumphant entry into the Prussian capital. So sure was the French general staff of success that, while it had provided its officers with excellent maps of Germany, it had left them singularly ill-supplied with maps of their own country, where, as it happened, all the serious fighting was to take place.

On August 2nd the French began their invasion of Southern Germany. The advance guard of the army of Metz crossed the frontier and, after a sharp fight, captured Saarbrücken, the bridgehead over the River Saar, leading into the Palatinate. This preliminary success was hailed with wild enthusiasm in Paris as an earnest of the final triumph, and all the more so because in it the Prince Imperial, only son and heir of Napoleon, received his ‘baptism of fire.’ The exultation, however, was short-lived. The Crown Prince with the third army—consisting mainly of South German troops—at once reacted to the news of the French advance. Marching massively into Alsace, on August 4th he defeated a French advance force at Weissenberg, and the main army of Alsace, two days later, at Wörth. The French, instead of invading the Palatinate, found themselves compelled to retreat in much disorder towards Châlons.

Pressure on the frontier being thus relieved, the first and second German armies, combining, moved forward. They easily reoccupied Saarbrücken, stormed

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the strongly defended heights of Spicher-en (August 6th), and pressed forward towards Metz. It was, indeed, round the great fortress of Metz that the next and most critical phase of the fighting took place. The German plan was, by forced marches and at any cost, to surround the fortress and prevent any help reaching it from the French reserves assembled at Belfort, Châlons, Verdun, or Paris. The plan was most daringly and skilfully carried out. As a result of sanguinary battles at Colombières (August 14th), Vionville and Mars-la-Tour (August 16th), and Gravelotte (August 17th), all the French communications with Metz were cut, and within the walls of the fortress were shut up 180,000 men under Marshal Bazaine.

The supreme object of the French now, of course, was to relieve Metz, and to effect a junction between Bazaine's army and the other main French force, led by Marshal Macmahon, encamped at Châlons. To effect this junction, Macmahon (accompanied by Napoleon himself) set out from Châlons by circuitous routes, hoping to conceal his intentions. The Germans, however, learned of his movements and his purposes from the newspaper reports of injudicious and inadequately censored war correspondents. A French paper innocently mentioned that he had moved his headquarters from Châlons to Reims—a sufficiently damaging revelation. The London *Times*, equally innocently, gave the whole

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plan away. The Germans, therefore, were easily able to frustrate the French design. Macmahon was met and checked at Beaumont on the Meuse, and was compelled—instead of marching south-east towards Metz—to retreat north-west towards the Belgian frontier. There at Sedan he was caught and hemmed in by superior German forces. Having made desperate but unavailing efforts to break through the iron ring, he and the Emperor, with 80,000 men, were forced to surrender (September 2nd 1870). Bazaine's efforts to break out of Metz were equally unsuccessful. On October 27th he, too, in circumstances that were infinitely discreditable to him, capitulated, together with a well-equipped force of 150,000 men. Thus, within three months of the beginning of operations, France appeared to lie prostrate, defenceless at the feet of her implacable foe.

V

The immediate effect of Sedan was the fall of the Second French Empire. Napoleon III was deposed (September 4th); the Empress Eugénie fled to England together with the Prince Imperial *; a Republic was proclaimed.

* Napoleon III, released from captivity, died in England in 1873: the Prince Imperial was killed in the Zulu War, 1879; the Empress continued to live in England for nearly half a century. She died in her ninety-fifth year, when on a visit to Spain, in July 1920, having seen the overthrow of the victors of 1870.

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This revolutionary change of government, however, did not bring the war to an end. On the contrary, the new republican leaders—Jules Favre, Adolphe Thiers, Léon Gambetta—infused new life into the national defence. They organised a provisional administration; raised new armies; sent embassies to the Powers; fought desperately to escape complete subjugation. They prolonged the hopeless struggle all through the terrific winter, the crucial conflict being centred round Paris. On September 19th 1870 the Germans invested the city with 147,000 men and 622 guns. Frantic efforts were made to relieve it. The fall of Strasburg, however, on September 28th, and of Metz a month later, released such large reinforcements of German troops that all the French attempts either to break in or out were defeated. On January 28th 1871 the great city was starved into surrender.

The war throughout its six-months' course had been conducted by the German high command not only with masterly efficiency, but also with unmitigated brutality. Similarly, when France lay prostrate, the victors showed no mercy, no sympathy, no generosity. With grim ferocity they were out to have their revenge not only upon Napoleon III, but also upon the memories of Napoleon I and Louis XIV. In their triumph all the latent barbarity of the race—never very far below the surface—displayed itself in its repulsive hideousness. The

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verdict of Sir Charles Grant Robertson is worth quoting :

In truth, these Prussians, leaders and subordinates alike, were an iron race, tough of skin, lavish in all the relations of life, of a stern brutality and a full-blooded and unrestrained force, and meting out to each other no little of the militant and graceless arrogance that defeated France had to endure. They were the victors, and they took care to let Europe as well as France feel it. Through all the events that make the history of these months so tragic for France, so intoxicating for Germany, so humiliating for Europe, there rings the gospel of the conqueror's sword. For pity, generosity, sympathy, you look in vain. The appeal is always to force.*

Paris having capitulated, an armistice having been agreed upon, and hostilities having died down, Preliminaries of Peace were signed on February 26th 1871, although they were not converted into the definitive Treaty of Frankfort on Main until the following May 10th. The unfortunate French ministers—Thiers and Favre—who had the painful task of negotiating with the insolent conquerors, suffered incredible outrages at the hands of Bismarck, whose behaviour even to his own colleagues was at this time almost intolerable. He raved and raged, displaying the temper of an angry gorilla.†

* C. Grant Robertson, *Bismarck*, p. 272.

† Cf. Grant Robertson, *Bismarck* (p. 273): ‘General Head Quarters was a camp of continuous strife. Bismarck quarrelled with everyone from the Crown Prince downward. With Moltke at Versailles it came to an open breach.’

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The terms of the treaty were, of course, hard. In essence they were: (1) The cession of Alsace including Strasburg, and of Lorraine including Metz; (2) the payment of a war-indemnity of approximately £200,000,000; (3) the reception and maintenance of a German army of occupation until the whole of the indemnity had been paid off; (4) a guarantee that France would always in her tariffs give to Germany 'the most favoured nation' treatment.

CHAPTER X

THE GREAT WAR OF 1914-1918

I

THE Power which dictated to prostrate and humiliated France the Treaty of Frankfort was no longer merely the kingdom of Prussia, or even the North German Confederation, but the German Empire. For Bismarck had seized the opportunity of the fiery heat of nationalism generated by victory and conquest to complete the Prussianisation of Germany. The defeat of France; the acquisition of Alsace and Lorraine with their two great fortresses; the extortion of five milliards of francs; the triumphal march of 30,000 German troops along the Champs-Élysées —these colossal achievements were the fruit not of debates and votes, but of ‘blood and iron.’ Where democracy had failed, and where ‘liberalism’ had made itself ludicrous, there Prussian militarism had prevailed. In the fervent glow of national exultation the particularism of Bavaria, Baden, Würtemberg, and Hesse-Darmstadt was melted down into a common Germanism.

One of Bismarck’s main tasks, and the one that most tried his temper during the period of the siege

of Paris (at which he was, to the intense annoyance of Moltke, continuously and interferingly present), was negotiations with the petty potentates of South Germany concerning the terms on which they would join the North German Confederation, and convert it into a Pan-German State. They realised that their junction would involve loss of independence: it would mean the subjection of their foreign policy and of their armed forces to Prussian control. The King of Bavaria was the most serious source of difficulty. This person—the eccentric and ultimately insane Ludwig II, the extravagant patron of Richard Wagner—was intensely jealous of his prerogatives. Only by means of long debates, and extensive concessions to his particularism, was he at length persuaded to bow his neck to the Prussian yoke.

Finally, when all difficulties had been overcome, it was agreed that Germany should be united as a Federal Empire, and that the King of Prussia should become *ex officio* ‘German Emperor’ (not ‘Emperor of Germany’). The King of Prussia was by no means eager to accept the new and questionable title. But, as usual, Bismarck, with the assistance of the Crown Prince, wore down his resistance. Thus, both the King of Bavaria and the King of Prussia having been subdued by Bismarck’s imperious will, the German Empire came into existence. The King of Bavaria copied out and signed a letter drafted by Bismarck inviting the King of Prussia to accept the

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title of ‘German Emperor.’ The King of Prussia, at Bismarck’s dictation, accepted the invitation. Accordingly, amid the reverberations of the six hundred guns that were bombarding Paris, the inauguration of the German Empire was proclaimed in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles, on January 18th 1871—that is to say, one hundred and seventy years to a day *after* the Elector Frederick of Brandenburg had been crowned King of Prussia at Königsberg, and forty-eight years to a day *before*, in the same palace at Versailles, the Conference was opened at which some of the more flagrant aggressions of Germany were to be redressed.

II

The dramatic scene at Versailles on January 18th 1871 marked the climax and culmination of Bismarck’s life work. He had accomplished the task that had baffled the skill and defied the power of Charlemagne, and Otto I, and Henry III, and Frederick Barbarossa, and Charles IV. He had achieved the unification of Germany. He had achieved it as the consequence of three wars, each of them deliberately planned and precipitated, each of them aggressive, and each of them followed by the annexation to Prussia of territories to which she had no valid claim. The unification of Germany was thus in effect the Prussification of Germany, and of much beside and beyond Germany. It was the

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submergence of the literary, artistic, philosophic, religious Germany that had gradually developed in early modern times under the influence of the Italian Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation, by militaristic and materialistic Germany, essentially pagan and barbaric, whose source was the Mark of Brandenburg. In the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles the representatives of a score of once-proud capitals—Munich, Stuttgart, Darmstadt, Karlsruhe, Dresden, Cassel, and the rest—bowed the knee to the Baal of Berlin.

It is worth noting, by way of contrast, how different was the unification of Italy, also achieved in 1870, under the guidance of Cavour and Victor Emmanuel II. The process of unification was commenced in 1859 by the sacrifice to France of Savoy, the ancestral home of the reigning House; it was completed by the removal of the venerable seat of government from Turin to Florence, and from Florence at last to Rome. In other words, the kingdom of Sardinia was merged and lost in the kingdom of Italy, whereas all the states of Germany were subordinated to the kingdom of Prussia, to its monarch, and, above all, to its Imperial Chancellor.

The Imperial Chancellor—elevated to the rank of a Prince in the newly constituted Empire—as he returned triumphant from subjugated Paris to beflagged Berlin, was under no illusions as to the instability and insecurity of his creation. He realised

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that as soon as the fervour of victory died down the old particularisms would display themselves, and he knew that all his skill and energy for many years would be needed to keep the Empire from disintegration. Very soon, too, other and most difficult domestic problems presented themselves to him. The first was a religious problem. The Papacy was much perturbed by the transference of the headship of Germany from Catholic Austria to Lutheran Prussia. In particular, it found its immemorial control of education threatened by the secular demands of the new totalitarian State. Hence for six years (1872-78) there raged throughout Germany, mainly round the schools, a *Kultur Kampf* which taxed all Bismarck's power and patience. Finally, indeed, he was glad to secure a truce without victory. For by 1878 he needed the alliance of the Church against a still more insidious and deadly foe to the authority of the State, namely, Social Democracy, which had adopted a fighting creed from Karl Marx and a militant organisation from Ferdinand Lassalle. At the same time, too, he was faced by novel and perplexing economic problems. For he was using the huge indemnities extorted from the French to develop new industries in Germany: within the four years 1871-75 the number of factories in the country was increased from 410 to 2267. The question of finding markets for the spate of commodities poured forth was not an easy one to answer,

particularly as it was rousing a formidable rivalry in Great Britain and the United States. In short, the domestic affairs of the new German Empire absorbed the major portion of Bismarck's attention during the first decade that succeeded the triumph of 1871.

All the same, foreign affairs were not neglected. His one chief concern, now that he had accomplished his great design, was to preserve the peace of Europe, and therefore to prevent the formation of any alliances or coalitions hostile to Germany. Prussia, indeed, was like a boa-constrictor which, having swallowed hastily and indiscriminately a whole colony of rodents—Schleswig, Holstein; Hanover, Hesse; Saxony, Bavaria—is experiencing digestive difficulty, and is in need of repose. The fundamental fact that he had to recognise was, of course, the implacable enmity of France—France defeated, devastated, despoiled, deprived of rich provinces and loyal subjects, mulcted, humiliated, burning for revenge. His main task, then, was to keep France isolated and weak. The thing which above all others he dreaded was a Franco-Russian *rapprochement*, and so long as he was in office he managed with diabolical skill to keep France and Russia apart. Further, he cleverly embroiled France with Italy by encouraging her to annex Tunis; and with Great Britain in respect of Egypt. No one ever succeeded more completely in applying the maxim, *Divide et impera*.

That was the negative side of his foreign policy. Its positive side consisted in the building up of alliances calculated to strengthen Germany's position. Thus he formed, first, the *Drei Kaiser Bund* (Germany, Austria, Russia) in 1872; but that collapsed under the strain of the Near Eastern complications of 1878. It was followed by the Austro-German Dual Alliance of 1879, which was converted into the Triple Alliance by the accession of Italy in 1882. Bismarck continued, however, to regard friendship with Russia as of vital importance to Germany, and he never rested until he had secured with her a treaty in 1884, renewed in 1887 for a second three years. He was preparing to seek its further renewal in 1890, when to the amazement both of himself and of the world he was dismissed from office by the young Kaiser, William II.

III

The Kaiser William I had died at the age of ninety-one on March 9th 1888. He had been succeeded by his son, Frederick (born in 1831). Frederick, however, at the time of his accession, was already stricken by mortal disease, and he lived to reign for only ninety-nine days. Hence on June 15th 1888 the Prussian throne and the imperial diadem passed to William II (born 1859), the son of Frederick and of his wife, Victoria, Princess Royal of Britain.

The young Kaiser—conceited, restless, ambitious,

impulsive, yet weak, and anxious to conceal weakness by bluster and bluff—was already dominated by men who had long chafed at the ‘safety first’ policy pursued by Bismarck since 1871. These men, confident in the overwhelming might of the German army, and knowing nothing of the anxieties that kept Bismarck quiescent, lusted to embark upon a policy of imperial expansion and world-dominion. Under their influence the youthful and injudicious William, having ‘dropped the pilot,’ set forth to navigate new and strange diplomatic oceans. He found his people, the newly united German folk—for the first time conscious of nationhood—ready to follow him in any adventure likely to lead to wealth or power. They were, as we have already remarked, in the same stage of political evolution as England, France, and Spain had been in the fifteenth century. They were predatory and non-moral—in a word, Prussianised—and their passion for plunder and power had been roused to fever-heat by the inflammatory and essentially insane teachings of a host of publicists, among whom Heinrich von Treitschke was *facile princeps*. This man, whose lectures on politics at Berlin University drew huge crowds from 1874 to 1896, stirred up his hearers to hatred and contempt of nations other than German (particularly French and English) and incited them to further aggression: ‘He is a fool,’ he cried, ‘who believes that this process of development can ever cease.’

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Three projects on which Bismarck had frowned were taken up with enthusiasm by William II. The first of these projects had as its object the mastery of the East. Bismarck, in 1878, at the time of the Russo-Turkish War, had declared that the matters at issue were not worth the bones of a single Pomeranian grenadier. Hence he had played the part of 'honest broker' at the Berlin Conference with sublime indifference as to its outcome. The Kaiser, on the other hand, had been persuaded to believe that in Asia Minor, Syria, Persia, Egypt, lay the way to the lordship of the earth. Hence he cultivated Turkey, visited Constantinople and Jerusalem, proclaimed himself the protector of Islam, planned a Berlin-Bagdad railway through a subjugated Balkan peninsula. Of course he was aware that such aggressive activity in the Near and Middle East would cause agitation in Russia and in the Slavonic world generally. But, strong in his headship of the Triple Alliance, he seemed to be entirely indifferent as to the attitude of the rest of mankind. He allowed the treaty with Russia to lapse in 1890, and he consistently treated his cousin 'Nicky'—the Tsar Nicholas II (1854-1918)—with a familiarity that did not attempt to conceal supreme contempt.

The second of William's projects—and one particularly alarming to Great Britain and France—was that of building up a great colonial empire. This project had been launched in the early 'eighties by

powerful bodies of German industrialists who desired fresh sources of cheap raw materials, and new markets for their manufactured goods. In 1882 they had formed a *Deutscher Kolonialverein*, followed two years later by a larger and more aggressive *Gesellschaft für deutsche Kolonisation*. Bismarck had paid no attention to the first organisation : extra-European matters did not interest him. But in 1884 he was busy trying to embroil France with Great Britain, and he saw in these colonial schemes a means to achieve that end. Hence with his encouragement and support, within the space of twelve months, German adventurers seized and claimed possession of 'Lüderitzland' (South-West Africa), Togoland, the Cameroons, and East Africa. Next year (1885) expansion in the Pacific began. A New Guinea company was founded which before the end of the century had added island to island until nearly a quarter of a million square miles of Pacific territory had been brought under German control. Finally, in 1897, Kiao-Chau was 'leased' from China.

These overseas dominions, together with the commerce that they were intended to create, necessitated the formation of a large merchant fleet, and this again required for its protection a powerful imperial navy. The Kaiser's third great project was the building of this invincible battle-fleet. 'The trident must be in our hand,' he said in 1897. 'Our future lies on the water,' he repeated the following

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year. And in that year he secured the passage of the first of the four Navy Laws under which the fleet of 1914 was constructed.

IV

The building of the German war-navy was recognised as a challenge by all the maritime powers in the world. For it soon became evident that Germany was entirely dissatisfied with the overseas dominions that she had managed to pick up in the last sixteen years of the nineteenth century. They were the leavings of the colonial empires built up by Portugal, Spain, France, Holland, and England in the sixteenth and following centuries. They were places too much in the sun. They did not attract settlers; they provided no important markets; their products lacked value and variety; they did not pay their own expenses. It was clear that successful colonisation would require the acquisition, by fair means or (preferably) foul, of territories already occupied by the older colonising nations. The regions which the Kaiser and his minions specially coveted were French Morocco, Portuguese Angola, British South-West Africa, Belgian Congo, and the Republic of Brazil. In order to secure all or any of these delectable lands it would be necessary for Germany to have a navy so strong as to make even Britain hesitate to challenge it. Hence the increasingly urgent

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and extravagant Navy Laws of 1898, 1900, 1907, and 1912. The Kaiser did not mince his words. 'I will never rest,' he said, 'until I have raised my Navy to a position similar to that occupied by my Army. German colonial aims can be gained only when Germany has become master of the Ocean.'

A Pan-German League was founded in 1891. Within the next twenty years it became the most powerful organisation in the Empire, having over two hundred branches. An early revelation of its large ambitions was given in an official publication, *Grossdeutschland und Mitteleuropa*, issued in 1895. This was supplemented sixteen years later by *Deutschland und Weltmacht*, a massive volume of 850 pages. The same year (1911) appeared O. R. Tannenberg's *Grossdeutschland*, in which it is made clear that Germany claimed (1) all lands inhabited by peoples of Germanic stock, e.g. Holland and Denmark; (2) all lands which have ever been Germanic, e.g. Switzerland; (3) all lands where Germans have settled in large numbers, e.g. Brazil; (4) all regions that Germans want, that is, the rest of the world.

Another typical manifesto of the critical year 1911 was General Friedrich von Bernhardi's *Deutschland und der nächste Krieg*. It glorified war; it incited the German people to prepare for it, and look eagerly forward towards participating in its thrills and its triumphs; it stirred up insensate hatred against

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France and Britain, and poured contempt alike upon their civilisation and their armaments. To defeat them would be easy, and to appropriate their possessions delightful. ‘France must be so completely crushed that she can never again come across our path.’

Coupled with this glorification of war and this incitement to plunder, there was an advocacy of ruthlessness in the conduct of war which marked the depth of barbarism whereto Germany had been sunk by the leaden heel of Prussianism. Clausewitz had set the tone early in the nineteenth century, in his text-book *Vom Kriege*, when he said that a conquered people should be left with nothing except their eyes wherewith to weep. Before the end of the century a chorus of merciless militants were descanting on the theme. A good representative of the unholy fraternity is General Julius von Hartmann, who in 1877-78 contributed a series of articles to the *Deutsche Rundschau*, entitled *Militärische Notwendigkeit und Humanität*. They mark a complete reversion to the morals and the mentality of the caveman. For instance :

It is a gratuitous illusion to suppose that modern war does not demand far more brutality, far more violence, than was formerly the case. . . . The enemy state must not be spared the want and wretchedness of war. These are particularly useful in shattering its energy and subduing its will.

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Continually fed with the poisonous fallacies of maniacs such as Nietzsche and Treitschke; incited to international crime by infatuated soldiers such as Bernhardi and Hartmann; armed to the teeth; and led by a megalomaniac Emperor eager to emulate and surpass the achievements of Frederick the Great and Bismarck, Germany in the early years of the present century constituted an unprecedented menace to the peace of the world.

V

The state most directly and immediately menaced, of course, was France. The Germans in 1871 thought that they had destroyed her. She made, however, a most remarkable and rapid recovery from her devastation and spoliation: in three years she paid off the huge indemnity and secured the reluctant departure of the German army of occupation. The Germans were disgusted, and openly blamed their leaders, who had in making peace been ‘misled by weak humanitarianism’! In 1875, indeed, Moltke demanded another war in order to finish France off, and Bismarck agreed to engineer a pretext. Neither Great Britain nor Russia, however, was willing to see France utterly extinguished. Queen Victoria wrote urgently to her aged and innocent relative, William I, imploring him to restrain his fire-eaters. The Tsar Alexander II paid a special visit to Berlin to

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inform the same old gentleman that if France were wantonly attacked, Russia would intervene. Hence, with gnashings of teeth, the would-be destroyers of France had to postpone their malignant design.

France, however, was well aware of the constant peril in which she stood, and, having lost Strasburg and Metz, she knew that she would be almost defenceless in face of a German invasion. She therefore sought to end the isolation to which Bismarck's astute diplomacy had reduced her. Her opportunity came with Bismarck's fall. For, as we have seen, in 1890 Kaiser William II allowed the Russo-German treaty of 1884 to lapse, and inaugurated a Near Eastern policy that alienated and alarmed the Tsar. Hence France and Russia drew together, and in 1897 the conclusion of a formal alliance was announced.

Meantime Great Britain had been surprised and alarmed by accumulating evidence of the novel unfriendliness of the parvenu German Empire. Until the advent of William II, in spite of the boorishness of Bismarck, the Germans had always been regarded as kindly if somewhat ill-mannered cousins to the English. But William II speedily displayed an insolent hostility to Britain that caused his grandmother, Queen Victoria, much concern, and his uncle, the Prince of Wales (afterwards King Edward VII), intense annoyance. Its most striking manifestation was the notorious 'Kruger telegram' of January 1896, which undoubtedly would have been the precursor of

German intervention on the side of the Boers if only the Kaiser had had a navy at his disposal.

In 1898 he set to work to supply this deficiency in his offensive armaments, and Britain watched with growing anxiety the building across the North Sea of this formidable challenge to her command of the sea. Now command of the sea, as Herr Hitler admits, was, except for purposes of aggression, an expensive luxury to Germany; but it was and is to Great Britain the condition not only of the maintenance of her Empire, but of her own mere existence. The Boer War, which broke out in 1899, provided the occasion for another outburst of anti-British fury on the part of Germany. The Kaiser strove to form a European coalition to secure Britain's defeat and dismemberment; but suspicion of his ultimate designs prevented both France and Russia from yielding to his persuasions. He used the occasion, however, to secure the Navy Law of 1900, which was avowedly directed against the British maritime supremacy.

The death of Queen Victoria in 1901 removed the last check upon the Kaiser's hostility to the British Empire, and increasingly from that date onward British statesmen, British diplomats, British consuls, and British merchants, found themselves opposed all over the world by agents of the unfriendly and unscrupulous German Reich. King Edward VII and his ministers clearly perceived the danger in

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which Britain stood by reason of her military weakness and her diplomatic isolation ; and they strove to remedy the defects in her defences. They strengthened and reorganised the Navy so as to meet the new German challenge ; they remodelled the Army, instituting both the Territorial and the Expeditionary Forces ; above all, they concluded the Entente with France in 1904 and with Russia in 1907. Before King Edward died in 1910 the menacing Triple Alliance of the Central European Powers was faced by a defensive Triple Entente alert to prevent German aggression.

VI

The Kaiser was intensely irritated by this coming-together of the predestined victims of his lust for dominion. He called it ‘encirclement,’ and he strove with persistent fury to break the ring. In 1905 he threw down the gage to France by visiting Tangier and challenging the French protectorate of Morocco. British and Russian support of France—together with Austrian and Italian lukewarmness in Germany’s defence—caused the irate Emperor to withdraw in dudgeon. In 1908 disturbances in the Balkans enabled the restless monarch to challenge Russia. This time he, acting in support of Austria, was superficially successful. He compelled the Tsar to abandon his championship of the Southern Slavs. But he did not break the Franco-Russian alliance.

On the contrary he strengthened it, since he made it evident that before long he would challenge it on the field of battle. In 1911 he made an occasion to test the temper of Britain. His now-mighty Navy, which was rapidly approaching equality with that of Britain, wanted naval bases in the Atlantic Ocean —one on the Moroccan coast, another in Iceland. Would Britain in her amiable blindness allow him to secure them? He made the experiment by sending a gunboat to Agadir, nominally to protect threatened German interests. The response of the eminently pacific British ministry was so emphatically in the negative, that he was compelled to beat a retreat; but for three months an Anglo-German war seemed probable. The Triple Entente, however, held fast, and for the moment the crisis passed. The German press, meantime, raged in polysyllabic fury, and made it clear that as soon as German naval and military preparations were completed, Germany's bid for world-dominion would be made.

VII

All the evidence at present available seems to show that in 1911 the war party definitely gained the ascendant in Berlin. The early months of 1912 saw the passage through the Reichstag of sensational Army and Navy Laws. In March 1913 a secret *Memorandum on the Strengthening of the German Army*

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was issued, a copy of which fell into French hands.* It prescribes methods by which German public opinion can be educated to regard ‘an offensive war’ as ‘a necessity in order to combat the provocations of our adversaries.’ It urges the hampering of the members of the hostile Triple Entente by stirring up rebellions in Egypt, in Tunis, in Algeria, in Morocco, in Russia herself. It contains the assurance that ‘neither ridiculous shriekings for revenge by French Chauvinists, nor the Englishmen’s gnashing of teeth, nor the wild gestures of the Slavs will turn us from our aim of protecting and extending *Deutschium* all the world over.’

The dawn of 1914 saw Germany almost ready for her plunge into the Great War, from which she confidently expected to emerge within three months possessed of the lordship of the world. Her preparations were many-sided and complete. First, diplomatically, she laboured to isolate the Triple Entente and to win over neutral countries (especially Holland, Belgium, Switzerland; Turkey, Bulgaria, Rumania) to her side. Moreover, in the Entente States themselves German emissaries toiled subterraneously, with ample funds at their disposal, to stir up sedition and strife.† Secondly, military and naval preparations

* It was published *in extenso* in the *French Yellow Book* (1914), p. 130.

† In the British Empire the special spheres of German corruption and intrigue were Ireland, Egypt, India, and South Africa.

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for war were pressed forward, as secretly as might be, but with feverish energy. The Army was increased from 700,000 to 870,000 on a peace footing, and from 5,000,000 to 5,500,000 at its full war strength. Krupp's great munition works at Essen enlarged its staff of workmen from 60,000 in 1911 to 124,000 in 1914. The naval programme was accelerated, and for the first time 15-inch guns were put on the new battleships. The Kiel Canal was widened so as to allow the largest vessels to pass freely between the Baltic and the North Sea. Large stores of fuel and provisions for warships were laid up in neutral harbours all over the world. Thirdly, the financial measures of the German Empire in 1913-14 gave the clearest of all possible indications that the German Government expected and intended early war. Finally, by lying propaganda of all sorts German public opinion was excited to burning hatred of Britain, France, and Russia; to a belief that Germany was encircled and threatened with destruction; but that German might was invincible and would, when put to the test, speedily prevail.

VIII

In 1914, then, nothing was wanting save a plausible pretext for launching the predestined attack. This was found—or, as some assert, provided—by the assassination of the Austrian Archduke Franz

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Ferdinand and his wife at Serajevo on June 28th. Nothing could have served the German purpose better. The crime was a dastardly one, alienating the sympathy of every decent person. It occurred in a remote part of Europe, not directly affecting the interests of either France or Britain. Serbia, with luck, would be crushed before Russia could come in ; Russia might be driven back before France would be stirred to intervene ; France, in her turn, might be overwhelmed before sluggish and pacific Britain (daily expecting both an Irish civil war and a great General Strike) could be moved to action. Then *Der Tag*, the great day of reckoning with Britain, would have arrived ! So, under German incitement and with promise of German support, Austria sent the ultimatum to Serbia on July 23rd,* and five days later began the Great War by the bombardment of Belgrade.

Germany had got the war that she wanted, and for which she had plotted and planned with devilish deliberation for many years—the war that was to see the final destruction of France, the rape of the French colonies, and the first stage in the ultimate

* By a curious coincidence, on the very day of the Austrian ultimatum (July 23rd 1914) Mr Lloyd George, Chancellor of the Exchequer, said in the House of Commons : ‘Our relations with Germany are very much better than they were a few years ago. There is none of that snarling which we used to see in the Press of these two great Empires. The feeling is altogether better between them.’ Within twelve days the two great Empires were at war !

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disintegration of the British Empire. The whole programme was arranged to the minutest detail. France—attacked by way of harmless and innocent Belgium, whose neutrality Prussia had guaranteed—was to be overwhelmed in a month; the Russian hosts were to be rolled back in another couple of months; Britain was to be cajoled or terrorised into quiescence, and the triumphant German armies were to be back in the dear (and greatly enlarged) Fatherland to celebrate a hilarious Christmas.

All through August 1914, when a speedy and overwhelming German victory was taken for granted, a torrent of predatory passion poured through the Prussian Press. For example, Dr. Franz von Liszt, the venerable and hitherto respectable jurist of Berlin University, wrote:

A tempest of patriotic exaltation is sweeping through the German land, and Treitschke's solemn pronouncement concerning war as a fountain of health for the people has all of a sudden risen into renewed estimation. The war has swept the tedious patience-game of the diplomats off the table and set the brazen dice of the battlefield rolling in its stead.*

Even his still more aged colleague, the world-famous classical scholar, Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Möllendorff, was carried off his feet by the flood.

* Liszt, *Ein Mitteleuropäischer Staatenverband*, Preface, p. 1.

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In an impassioned speech, subsequently published, he cried :

‘Bestir you, my Comrades ! To horse, to horse !
And away to the field and to freedom.’

Truly a splendid song. It thrills through all our muscles, and makes us feel as though we ourselves would like once more to take our share in a joyous fight.*

There was no question in Germany during August 1914 as to ‘war-guilt.’ The Germans boastfully and exuberantly claimed that they had made the war when and where they desired it. On August 1st, the day on which Germany’s war with Russia formally began, the Kaiser’s intimate friend, Herr Maximilien Harden, wrote in *Die Zukunft* :

Why not admit what is and must be the truth, namely, that between Vienna and Berlin everything was fully prepared : We should be mere slaves, unworthy of the men who achieved predominance in Germany, if fifty years after Königgrätz things could be otherwise.

A short time afterwards he recurred to the theme :

Cease the pitiful attempts to excuse Germany’s action. Not as weak-minded blunderers have we undertaken the fearful risk of this war. We wanted it.

* Wilamowitz-Möllendorff, *Zwei Reden* (1914), p. 4. The ‘splendid song’ is from Schiller’s *Wallenstein*.

IX

The war, however, did not go as Germany had planned and expected. The German violation of Belgium—an act of supreme folly, as well as a dastardly international crime—not only met with a stronger and more protracted resistance from the Belgians than had been anticipated, but it brought Britain into the war at a date (August 4th) when it was still possible for her entry to be effective. The Russian mobilisation was accomplished far more speedily than had been thought possible, and a devastating Russian invasion of East Prussia within the first week of the war called away from the Western Front large forces that were necessary for the swift subjugation of France. Hence the crucial battle of the Marne (September 5th-10th 1914), which should have led to the capture of Paris, resulted in a German reverse, a retreat to the Aisne, and the inauguration of a system of trench-warfare that endured for more than four years.

Into the details of those four tragic years it is, of course, impossible, as well as unnecessary, for us to enter. During all that time Germany strove with the ferocity of increasing desperation to escape the penalties which her wanton and insolent aggressiveness demanded. With growing disregard of all the recognised principles of international morality and custom; with ruthless brutality and bestial savagery,

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she ravaged helpless countries, and at sea sank merchant ships, and even hospital ships, at sight. Her reckless wickedness, however, ultimately met its due recompense. One by one the horrified and terrified nations of the civilised world joined the alliance against these Teutonic barbarians who, inspired by the passions of their pagan ancestors, were armed with the deadly weapons of modern science. Italy broke away from the Triple Alliance in 1915 and joined the Entente; Rumania entered in 1916; America and other states in 1917. By that time, too, British sea-power had got its stranglehold of the bandit-nation. The year 1918 saw the last frantic effort of the cornered criminal to break out. The effort was defeated—although at a frightful cost to the Allies—and Germany had to undergo the salutary humiliation of unconditional surrender on November 11th. The nation which had so boastfully taken the sword in 1914 had by the sword perished. In the struggle which she so wantonly provoked, she had lost 1,773,000 men killed and 4,216,058 wounded. The net direct cost of the war to her—a cost which she had expected to extort from her enemies by means of indemnities—was estimated by an American statistician at 35,334 million dollars.* Instead of achieving for herself *Weltmacht*, she had brought upon herself *Niedergang*.

* E. L. Bogart, *Direct and Indirect Costs of the Great World War*, p. 267.

CHAPTER XI

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I

DURING the course of the Great War Germany compelled two of her opponents—Russia and Rumania—to capitulate. The terms which she imposed upon them, while she was still confident of her power to defeat all her foes, are eloquent of her mentality. They deserve careful contemplation, for they are too often forgotten or ignored by those amiable but misguided sentimentalists who consider that the terms of the Treaty of Versailles were too severe.

(I) By the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk concluded with Russia on March 3rd 1918, and supplemented by other dictated instruments later in the year, Russia was required (i) to surrender Poland, Courland, Lithuania, Livonia, Estonia, Finland with the Aaland Islands, and also the Ukraine, the vast corn-growing and oil-producing region of Russia proper; (ii) to hand over to Turkey the districts of Ardahan, Kars, and Batoum; (iii) to pay to Germany an indemnity of six thousand million gold marks (about £300,000,000); (iv) to supply Germany with timber duty free.

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By this treaty Russia was reduced to an area smaller than that which Peter the Great had inherited in A.D. 1689. Mr F. A. Voigt, commenting on the treaty, says:

Russia was dismembered in such a way that, if the treaty had stood, she would have lost most of her industries as well as her richest agricultural region, the Ukraine—which also included her Black Sea ports. The Baltic would have become a German lake, and along the eastern shores of the Baltic there would have been a series of vassal states under German tutelage and hostile to Russia. European Russia's richest resources would have been exploited to the advantage of Germany, and many millions of her people would have come under German tutelage. Russia herself would have ceased to be a European Power at all, and would have become a crippled and mainly Asiatic State, with Germany and the German dependencies always able to paralyse her at the least sign of revolt.*

Germany, moreover, did not mean the treaty to remain a dead letter. In spite of her preoccupation on the Western front, she (together with Austria) at once sent troops to occupy the Ukraine, exploit its resources, and establish a military dictatorship. At the same time she took possession of Finland, which in April 1918 was made to offer its throne to the Kaiser's brother-in-law, Charles of Hesse. The same month the Kaiser himself was proclaimed King of Esthonia. In July Prince William of Urach,

* F. A. Voigt, *Unto Caesar* (1938), p. 180.

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of the House of Würtemberg, was set up as King in Lithuania. Before the summer of 1918 was over the Baltic was well on the way to complete Germanisation.

(II) By the Treaty of Bucharest, concluded on May 7th of the same year, Rumania was required (i) to surrender the Dóbruja; (ii) to hand over to Hungary her whole strategic frontier on the Carpathians, thus rendering herself defenceless; (iii) to disband her military forces; (iv) to admit and to maintain for an indefinite period an Austro-German army of occupation; (v) to place all her economic resources, and particularly her corn and oil, at the disposal of the Central Powers. In other words, Rumania was to be reduced to complete vassalage to her Teutonic and Magyar conquerors.

When on one occasion a neutral observer was expressing to a high German official the view that the Treaties of Brest and Bucharest were somewhat harsh, he was told that they were extremely light as compared with the terms which Germany intended to impose on Great Britain and her allies when they were defeated. What these proposed terms were to be was outlined shortly afterwards by Count von Roon, a member of the Prussian *Herrenhaus*, as an encouragement to the German armies to persevere. They were to be dictated in Paris as follows: (i) the cession to Germany of the whole of Belgium and of the French coast as far as, and including, Calais; (ii) the cession also of the Briey-

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Longwy region of North-Eastern France with all its industrial resources ; (iii) the transference to the German army as a supplement to Metz and Strasburg of the great fortresses of Toul, Verdun, and Belfort, thus placing France permanently at the mercy of her secular enemy ; (iv) the restoration of all the German colonies ; (v) the surrender by Great Britain of the whole of her navy and all her coaling-stations ; (vi) the cession by Great Britain of Gibraltar to Spain and of Egypt with the Suez Canal to Turkey ; (vii) the partition of Serbia and Montenegro between Austria and Bulgaria ; (viii) the payment of an indemnity of £9,000,000,000 by the Allies ; (ix) the occupation of Allied territory by German armies—maintained at the expense of the defeated Allies—until the whole of the indemnity was paid off.

II

Such are the terms of the actual and projected treaties of victorious Germany, in the light of which the terms of the Treaty of Versailles imposed upon defeated Germany in June 1919 by the hard-driven but finally successful Allies should be considered. When regard is paid, first, to Germany's responsibility in precipitating the war, which but for her would never have taken place : secondly, to her monstrous and unpardonable violation of Belgian neutrality which she herself had guaranteed : thirdly,

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to her ruthless devastation of territories occupied by her hordes, her senseless and purely malicious destruction of mines, orchards, gardens, lovely chateaux and venerable churches: fourthly, to her immoral and inhuman repudiation of all the mitigations to the horrors of war introduced by international agreements—her use of poison gas, her diabolical employment of mines and submarines, her bombings of hospitals and open towns—when all these things are taken into account the terms of the Treaty of Versailles would appear to err, if at all, on the side of leniency rather than on that of severity. The terms, moreover, were dictated at Versailles, and not, as they undoubtedly should have been, at Berlin. Germany was spared—most mistakenly—the experience of hostile occupation.

The Treaty of Versailles is an enormous document. It contains no fewer than 440 articles, and when printed *in extenso* it fills a book about three times the size of the present volume. Only the main provisions can be mentioned here. It begins by formulating the Covenant of the League of Nations, with which we are not here concerned. Suffice it to say that this well-intentioned document, imposed upon the European Powers by the insistence of the American President, was wrecked from the start by America's refusal to implement her President's scheme.

The Treaty then proceeds to deal with defeated Germany. It requires (1) the return of Alsace and

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Lorraine to France, in order ‘to redress the wrong done by Germany in 1871’; (2) the restoration of Belgium, together with the frontier districts of Moresnet, Malmédy, and Eupen; (3) the recession to Denmark of the dominantly Danish portion of Schleswig, stolen by Prussia in 1864–66; (4) the rehabilitation of Poland, wrongfully partitioned in the eighteenth century, with special provisions for Danzig and Memel; (5) the transference of the captured German colonies and overseas stations, under mandates of the League of Nations, to the British Empire, France, Belgium, and Japan; (6) the cession to France for fifteen years of the coal mines of the Saar Basin, as some compensation for the wanton destruction of French mines by the German invaders. In addition, Germany was required to surrender her enormous armaments, including her war-fleet; to abolish compulsory military service; to demilitarise the Rhineland; to destroy the harbour and fortifications of Heligoland. Further, she was forbidden to possess any military or naval air forces, or any submarine vessels, and her surface vessels were strictly limited both in number and in size. Her army was to be kept within the 100,000 maximum, and was to be used purely for internal police purposes. Finally, certain notorious ‘war criminals,’ including the Kaiser, were to be handed over to the Allies for trial and punishment; and reparations, to be assessed later, were to be paid as compensation.

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for the colossal damage caused by the war. For (so runs the famous 'war-guilt' article No. 231):

The Allied and Associated Governments affirm, and Germany accepts, the responsibility of Germany and her Allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggressions of Germany and her Allies.

It will be observed that territorially the treaty did little more than restore the stolen property acquired by the banditries of Bismarck and Frederick the Great. The colonial clauses deprived Germany of dominions which were of but little use to her; which had been a heavy source of expense; which she had grossly misgoverned; and which she had employed largely as bases for attacks upon her neighbours. The disarmament and demilitarisation clauses were imperatively necessary—as we are now all too vividly aware—in order to prevent, if possible, a dangerous recrudescence of Germany's periodical and chronic war-fever. The demand for reparations was justified by the magnitude of the German depredations, and by the enormous expenses to which the Allied Governments had been put in defeating Germany's efforts to destroy them, and attain to world-dominion.*

* The British National Debt alone had been increased from some £700 millions to over £7000 millions, the annual charges on which exceed £300 millions.

III

The problem of assessing the amount to be paid by Germany by way of reparations was one of extraordinary difficulty and complexity. On the one hand, Germany was reduced to desperate poverty, partly by her own prodigious war-expenditure, and partly by the complete cessation for four years of her overseas commerce. On the other hand, not even in the days of her pre-war prosperity could she possibly have given adequate compensation for the widespread ruin she had wrought. It was quite beyond her capacity, even if she had had the will, to pay for the damage done in Belgium and North-Eastern France, or to replace the 750 million tons of shipping sunk by her warships. A committee of experts appointed to deal with the question recommended (1921) £6000 millions as a fair compromise between what she ought to pay and what she could pay. It was, it will be noted, only two-thirds of the sum that Germany had been intending, if victorious, to impose upon, and actually to extort from, the Allies.

The subsequent history of the reparations business is a lamentable one—a spectacular exhibition of German dishonesty and Allied stupidity. On the one side, Germany played the ‘old soldier’ to perfection; defaulted; deflated her currency; went bankrupt (1923); cried aloud for relief, and threatened

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to go communist and join up with Bolshevik Russia if she did not get it. On the other side the Allies displayed extreme gullibility. In response to Germany's cries, a Reparations Commission, under the American General Charles G. Dawes, was summoned to Paris in the early months of 1924. As the result of their deliberations German reparations were scaled down to £125 millions a year, and it was conceded that Germany, in order to restore her currency and restart her commerce, should be allowed to borrow money in the Allied countries. Accordingly, during the next five years she borrowed £900 millions, mainly from America, a large part of which she spent on secret rearmament. About £400 millions she paid over to the Allies in respect of reparations; then in 1929 she again defaulted, again threatened bankruptcy and Bolshevisation, and ceased to pay either reparations or interest on her loans. Thus—having paid all her reparations since 1924 out of borrowed capital—she 'got away' with £500 millions of Allied money!

To deal with this new situation the so-called Young Commission met at The Hague in 1929. The German indebtedness was reduced to £100 millions a year, with a promise of further reductions in course of time. All, however, was in vain. Whether or not Germany could pay, she had no intention of doing so. Instead of paying she was busy borrowing again, and the countries to whom she already owed

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so much were reduced to the necessity of lending her millions of pounds more in order to prevent her from wrecking the financial system of the world. Hence in 1932 once again the desperate Powers sent their representatives into conference, this time at Lausanne, in order to make an end of the muddle. Since it was clear that Germany was never going to pay anything more, they made the best of an exceedingly bad job by cancelling reparations altogether. Thus it came to pass that when at the beginning of the next year (1933) Herr Hitler attained to supreme power in Germany, he was able—leaving the whole burden of war-indebtedness to be borne by the Allies in general, and Great Britain in particular—to employ the carefully conserved resources of resurgent Germany, to the extent of some £800 millions a year, to the congenial task of rearming her and preparing her for the next war.

IV

The mention of Herr Hitler reminds us that we have so far made no note of the revolutionary changes that had taken place within Germany herself as the result of the military and naval débâcle of 1918. The German Empire as established in 1871 was a thoroughly anti-democratic institution. The popular assembly, the Reichstag, had no control over the executive. All effective power in the Empire resided with the Kaiser, the Imperial Chancellor

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(whom he appointed), and the *Bundesrat* (the upper house of the legislature, whose members were nominated by the rulers of the twenty-five states that constituted the federal Reich). And the *Bundesrat* itself was dominated by the Prussian delegates appointed by the Kaiser as King of Prussia. Even before the war the Social Democratic Party, strongly represented in the vocal but not instrumental Reichstag, had been demanding ministerial responsibility, franchise reform, secret ballot, female suffrage, as well as economic innovations of a Communistic type. The alarming growth of Social Democracy had been, indeed, probably one of the causes that had led the Imperial Government to seek the distraction of war. At any rate, the war put a stop for a time to political agitation, and so long as the war went well the whole German nation—save for a small Communistic faction led by Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg—rallied to the call of the Kaiser. But as the shadow of impending defeat darkened the horizon, and as the Allied blockade brought privation and misery to the disillusioned masses, the demand for a change of government was again raised with clamorous insistence. In particular, the conscripts driven to fruitless slaughter on the Western front, and the seamen sent to almost certain death in submarines, cried aloud for peace—peace at any price—a peace which the Allies declined to concede to the Kaiser and his satellites except on

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terms of unconditional surrender, since, as they said, 'the nations of the world do not and cannot trust the word of those who have hitherto been the masters of German policy.'

The growing German discontent first found serious manifestation in a widespread strike of factory workers in January 1918. The Government responded with a ferocious repression that terminated in the drafting of thousands of the strikers into the army and the sending of them into the trenches. It was a fatal expedient. For the revolutionary conscripts were not only useless as soldiers, they were also spreaders of sedition among forces already, through hunger and lack of clothing, ripe for rebellion. The summer of 1918 witnessed great military disorder, accompanied by thousands of desertions. Then, on October 28th, came the naval climax. The German Admiralty, realising that—miracle apart—the war was lost, ordered the High Seas Fleet to put to sea and engage the British Grand Fleet in a last desperate appeal to Odin. The seamen replied: 'If the English attack us, we will defend our coasts to the last; but we will not ourselves attack. Farther than Heligoland we will not go.' They knew that their ships were rotten with stagnation; that their best guns had been removed for land warfare; that their crews had been depleted for service in submarines; and that, in such circumstances, to challenge the British Grand Fleet was

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simply to ask for total annihilation. So they refused to obey the order to go out. By November 4th mutiny had become revolution. The red flag was hoisted at Kiel; Soviets on the Russian model were instituted; and the cry 'Long live the Republic' was raised. The Revolution thus started spread with lightning rapidity to all the great cities and ultimately to the army itself.

On the first news of the mutiny at Kiel the Kaiser had fled precipitately from Berlin to the army headquarters at Spa (October 29th). There he received insistent demands for his abdication. He tried to save his crown and his head by offering belated concessions to democracy, and by appointing a new and liberal Chancellor, Prince Max of Baden. It was all in vain. For a week or more he wriggled and twisted, but on November 9th he had to yield. Having expressed his intention to resign, he fled across the frontier into neutral Holland, where he was interned. Two days later the German army acknowledged defeat, and saved itself from extinction by accepting the terms of an armistice dictated by Marshal Foch.

V

At Berlin, in place of the defeated and discredited monarchy a republic was set up under the provisional headship of Friedrich Ebert, the Socialist

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leader. Early in 1919 a National Assembly was summoned to Weimar to frame a constitution. The scheme which ultimately emerged was a thoroughly bad one, eloquent of the political incapacity of the German people. It was doctrinaire, ultra-democratic, complicated, replete with paralysing checks and balances, and, above all, cursed by the principle of 'proportional representation,' which is the devil's own device for rendering democracy unworkable. The net result was that the electorate was split up, not into compact and clear-cut parties, but into a crowd of wrangling groups, not one of which had any chance of obtaining a clear majority in the Reichstag. The result was administrative chaos.

The Weimar Constitution broke down, however, not only because of the folly and ineptitude of those who framed it, but also because of the heavy assaults that were directed against it by domestic enemies. From the left it was attacked by furious hordes of Communists, subsidised by the Russian Bolsheviks, who strove to convert Germany into a Soviet Republic. From the right it was sapped and assailed by combinations of the old Governing Classes; by the Prussian *Junkers*; by the officers of the beaten but still arrogant army; by Nationalists eager for the recovery of forfeited territory and for revenge on victorious foes.

The Weimar Government, led though it was by a succession of 'transient and embarrassed phantoms,'

succeeded in surviving several serious attacks in its early years. The most formidable were a series of Communistic risings in 1919; a military revolt (known as the Kapp *Putsch*) in March 1920—a revolt which actually succeeded in securing Berlin for nearly a week, ultimately suppressed by a general strike of the city workers—and a *Putsch* essayed on November 8th 1923 at Munich by Adolf Hitler, then an unknown and insignificant house-painter, who, by gifts of volcanic oratory, had risen to the leadership of a new National Socialist Party pledged to suppress Marxism, eliminate the Jews, abolish the Weimar Constitution, repudiate the Versailles Treaty, rearm Germany, recover all her lost dominions, and reassert her claim to the lordship of the world.

The 'Nazi' programme made a strong appeal to militant and aggressive Germany, smarting under defeat, and suffering acutely from the collapse of her currency. The *Putsch* of 1923, however, was premature, and Hitler paid the penalty for his untimely rising by a brief sojourn in prison, where he relieved the pressure of his passion by writing *Mein Kampf*, the Koran of his new racial religion. The influence of that extraordinary book, supplemented by the hypnotic power of the writer's demagogic orations, steadily increased the numbers of the 'Nazi' party, which from 1929 onward became formidable, owing to the distress caused by the great slump in world-commerce that marked that year. In 1932

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Hitler felt strong enough to stand as candidate for the Presidency of the Republic, and, although he was beaten by the aged Field-Marshal Hindenburg, he secured no fewer than 13 million votes (as against Hindenburg's 19 million). During the same year his party became the largest single party in both the Prussian Diet and the Republican Reichstag. Hitler, however, depended for power less on votes than on violence. He had gathered, trained, and equipped a large body of brown-shirted Storm Troopers (the S.A. or *Sturm Abteilung*) as well as a Picked Bodyguard (the S.S. or *Schutz Staffel*). When, therefore, at the beginning of 1933 he demanded the Chancellorship of the Reich, he could not be denied. He was installed in office on January 30th, and from that day his dictatorship must be dated.

VI

Adolf Hitler, when in January 1933 he found himself Chancellor of the German Reich, represented the seething disgust of the German nation at its defeat in war; at its disruption under the Treaty of Versailles; at the demand of its enemies for reparations; at the loss of its colonies and the ruin of its commerce; at the collapse of its currency and the impoverishment of the whole of its middle class; at the hatred with which for its crimes it was regarded by the whole of the civilised world. Hitler stood

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for rearmament and conscription; for the repudiation of the Versailles Settlement and the recovery of all the lost German possessions; for the abolition of the intolerable Weimar Constitution; for the expulsion of the Jews from the Fatherland; for the suppression of Marxian Communism.

His programme of defiance and revenge captured the imagination of Young Germany—which was the post-war reincarnation of Old Prussia—and during the course of 1933 the development of his power was rapid and complete. By the ingenious device of setting fire to the Reichstag buildings and attributing the crime to the Communists (February 27th) he secured an absolute majority at a Reichstag election held the following week: he captured 338 seats out of 645. Then his course was easy, and on the surface constitutional. He secured an *Enabling Act* which gave him almost absolute power. Thus armed, he proceeded to suppress all rival authorities in the State; to abolish all political parties and groups except the National Socialist; to subjugate all institutions — trade unions, churches, schools, universities, the newspaper press—to Nazi supervision and control. On April 1st he inaugurated that cruel and irrational boycott of the Jews which has been one of the darkest blots on the Nazi régime.

All this related to the internal politics of Germany. It was viewed with growing disapproval and disgust

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by the civilised and democratic peoples of the world. But it called for no interference on their part. Very different was the case, however, when Hitler began ostentatiously and feverishly to rearm the German youth and work them up for war. He inaugurated the movement in October 1933 by withdrawing the German representatives from (and so wrecking) a Disarmament Conference then sitting in Geneva. At the same time he announced Germany's departure from the League of Nations. After that the re-militarisation of the Reich, so congenial to the German soul, went on apace. Armaments, in open defiance of the Treaty of Versailles, were piled up at a colossal rate. Big guns, machine-guns, rifles, tanks, bombs, trench-mortars, sea-mines, torpedoes—all these, and many other instruments of death, were stored up in lavish profusion. Scientific ingenuity and inventive skill were almost wholly prostituted to the service of destruction. In particular, special attention was devoted to (1) 'pocket battleships' so powerful that they could sink anything that could catch them, and so swift that they could escape anything that could sink them; (2) small submarines, as deadly as large ones, and yet so light in tonnage that they would enable Germany to attain a numerical equality with Britain; (3) aircraft so many, so speedy, so formidable, that they would make it possible for German airmen to obliterate both the capitals and the arsenals of their enemies within a few hours of

the outbreak of hostilities ; and (4) poison gases so mephitic that they would destroy in agony both the armies and the civilian population of their foes.

Simultaneously, the whole organisation of German social life was directed to belligerent ends. All kinds of military or semi-military societies were instituted to train men and boys to fight. For instance, so-called 'Labour Camps,' 4500 in number, were really drill-grounds ; so-called 'Sports Associations,' with six million members, were mainly devoted to the game of rifle-shooting ; the so-called 'Hitler Youth' in schools, more than four million in all, were practised in the art of grenade-throwing.

Together, too, with this gigantic provision of weapons of war, and this universal training of fighting-men, went the revival of the German war-spirit. Herr Hitler's *Mein Kampf*—that classic of national hate and racial insanity, which every Nazi was bound to buy and read—was supplemented by such works as Ulrich Müller's *Chemical Warfare*, Professor Banse's *Germany, Prepare for War*, and Dr W. von Kloeber's amazing perversion of history, entitled *From the World-War to the National Revolution, 1914–1933*. They all tended to heat to explosion-point the national German passion for revenge, lust for conquest, and appetite for world-dominion.

VII

Meantime in Germany Hitler was consolidating and extending his dictatorial power, ruthlessly crushing all who stood in his way, whether Jews, Catholics, or Lutherans; whether Liberals, Socialists, or Communists. Rarely has mortal man prevailed by means of fear over so large a variety of hate; and rarely has mortal man caused so much misery and yet survived to survey it.

In 1933 a law was passed by the submissive Reichstag identifying the Nazi Party with the German State and declaring the existence of every other party illegal. Next year (1934) three notable events occurred. First, on February 25th, an order was issued requiring all officials of the Reich—over a million in number—to take an oath of absolute and unquestioning obedience to the Chancellor. Secondly, on June 30th, in an appalling ‘blood-bath’ Hitler extinguished by assassination every person, including some of his most intimate associates, whose rivalry or insubordination he suspected. Thirdly, when on August 2nd the old and senile Hindenburg died, Hitler secured the office of President of the Republic, in addition to that of Chancellor, thus concentrating in his own hand all executive control. Never in human history had any individual risen so rapidly from complete insignificance to so great a *plenitudo potestatis*.

His programme now took shape, and it was announced with a frankness and a clarity that exceeded even that of Bismarck. It went considerably beyond that outlined in *Mein Kampf*, extensive though that was. It began with the complete rearming and refortification of Germany. Then, on the basis of invincible military might, it went on to provide for (1) the absorption of Austria in the Reich; (2) the acquisition of the Sudeten regions of Czechoslovakia; (3) the recovery for the Reich of Memel, Danzig, and the Polish Corridor; (4) the conquest of the Ukraine from Russia; (5) the re-annexation of Alsace and Lorraine from France—which, incidentally, was to be completely and finally crushed in the process; (6) the re-conquest of the Southern Tyrol from Italy; Northern Schleswig from Denmark; Eupen and Malmédy from Belgium; (7) the invasion and reduction of Great Britain and her Empire, the establishment of the German command of the sea, the re-creation of a new German Colonial Dominion, vaster and richer than the old one, and, finally, (8) the seizure of the Lordship of the World.

The very magnitude and apparent absurdity of this megalomaniac programme caused the languid and easy-going leaders of the democratic States—anxious for nothing so much as for peace in their time—to regard it with amazed and even amused indifference. They were destined, however, speedily to be roused from their lethargy by a series of painful

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shocks. For it was soon evident that both Hitler and Young Germany took it very seriously, and regarded it as well within the bounds of realisation.

The story of the doings of Hitler, as well as the record of his sayings (which are intended to deceive his hearers and conceal his doings), is so recent and so well known that it is needless for me to do more than merely mention the main items. They reveal, of course, a complete disregard of treaty obligations, a total indifference to the rights of all non-German peoples, and a violation of all the principles of international honour. The story is one of incessant aggression; sheer banditry on the grand scale.

The chief items are as follows: (1) On March 16th 1935, in defiance of the Treaty of Versailles, he reintroduced conscription for the German army, navy, and air-force; (2) on March 7th 1936, in repudiation of the freely negotiated Treaty of Locarno, he reoccupied the demilitarised Rhineland, and began preparations for its refortification; (3) in March 1938—Germany being by that time rearmed and refortified—he began to carry through the expansive part of his programme by annexing Austria. A previous attempt made prematurely when Germany was yet weak (July 1934) had failed, owing to Italy's threat of counter-invasion; (4) encouraged by this success, he pressed his demand for the Sudeten regions of Czecho-Slovakia, and prepared to take

them by force in September 1938 if they were not voluntarily ceded to him. A first-class European crisis then developed, for Czecho-Slovakia was guaranteed by France; France was guaranteed by Russia; and Britain was much concerned to maintain the menaced balance of power. The crisis was tided over by the submission of the Czecho-Slovak Government, under severe pressure by France and Britain, neither of whom was in a condition to risk a European war. (5) This tremendous diplomatic triumph—infinitely humiliating and disgraceful to the Entente Powers—apparently whetted the German appetite for annexations: for in March 1939 the remainder of Czecho-Slovakia was swallowed up. This wanton aggression, made in violation of Hitler's repeated promises, and in equal violation of his avowed racial principles, at length forced the attention of even the most sluggish and least belligerent of European statesmen to the growing magnitude of the German menace. (6) On March 24th Lithuania, under threat of immediate invasion, was compelled to disgorge the port of Memel. (7) Scarcely had Memel been acquired when Germany began to clamour for Danzig. This involved a mortal threat to Poland. Since it was clear that to German aggressions under the Hitler régime there was to be no end, Britain and France combined to guarantee aid to Poland if she were wantonly attacked. In spite of this guarantee, and in spite of strenuous Franco-

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British efforts to keep the peace, Hitler persisted in his demands, and on September 1st launched his vast fleets of tanks and aircraft over the indefensible Polish borders.

So began the Great War of 1939.

CHAPTER XII

GERMANIA CONTRA MUNDUM

THE story lightly sketched in the preceding pages is of a single texture throughout. It is the story of a people always warlike, always aggressive, an Esau among nations, a rogue among elephants. It is also the story of a people torn internally by truceless feuds, lacking in unity, devoid of political sense, addicted to violent crime and bottomless treachery, a constant source of disturbance in the heart of Europe. It is the story, too, of a people, who, in spite of its central position, has remained isolated and alien from the Commonwealth of Christendom. Converted late and imperfectly to the religion of the Cross, it has remained fundamentally pagan. Cut off from the community of the Latin peoples by its harsh and barbaric language, it has failed to keep in touch with the culture of the modern world. This is all the more lamentable because the German peoples have throughout the ages displayed qualities which in happier circumstances might have rendered great service to humanity. They have shown high courage in danger; amazing endurance in suffering; pathetic submission to leaders; a remarkable capacity

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for believing what they are taught and for doing what they are told to do ; a powerful though narrow intelligence which has enabled them to make many additions to abstract knowledge, although few to practical wisdom. All these gifts, however, have been prostituted to selfish and unworthy ends. Their courage has made them a scourge to their neighbours, and it has too often degenerated into a brutal tyranny. Their endurance of suffering has filled them with bitterness and hatred, causing them, when occasion has presented itself, to oppress with ferocious persecution those whom they consider responsible for their pains. Their blind submission to leaders has all too frequently resulted in their following unworthy adventurers who have led them into dishonour and disaster. Their extreme credulity, mental docility, and moral servility, has made them the victims of countless false prophets, among whom in recent times Nietzsche, Treitschke, Bernhardi, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Ewald Banse, and Adolf Hitler, stand eminent. Under the influence of men such as these they have become filled with a boundless and baseless conceit, deluding themselves into the belief that they are a pure race, a superior race, and a race whose *Kultur* (really a relic of primitive barbarism) is better than that of the rest of mankind.

If we ask how it is that a people so closely akin in origin and race to the English have developed characteristics so markedly different from theirs, the

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answer, I think, is to be found primarily in the region of historical geography. The Anglo-Saxons, the Jutes, the Danes, the Normans—all of them Germanic in blood—manifested in the Britain of the fifth and following centuries all the main features of their continental kin. They were warlike, aggressive, cruel, credulous, non-moral. They, too, were constantly in conflict with one another and with their neighbours. But—and this is the all-important point—their struggles were carried out in an island; an island

set in the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall,
Or as a moat defensive to a house.

When once the Heptarchy had passed through Triarchy into Unity; when the boundary between England and Wales had been obliterated by the advent of the Welsh Tudors to the English throne; and when the Anglo-Scottish border wars had been ended by the conversion of James VI of Scotland into James I of England—then, all problems of frontiers were for ever settled. Nature had fixed the bounds of the habitation of the British peoples. Concerned only to keep their sea-defences secure, they were able to devote their energies to the great tasks of developing popular self-government, establishing religious and political freedom, improving agriculture, extending industry, enlarging commerce, founding colonies, cultivating the science and arts.

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Germany, on the other hand, as we have more than once observed, has not got, and never has had, any natural frontiers. On the west a fluctuating and extremely debatable middle region divided, and still divides, her from France. On the east a yet vaster belt of doubtful territory—the whole immense plain, indeed, between the Elbe and the Vistula—has been chronically at issue between the Teuton and the Slav. Moreover, within this constantly changing Germany, in the absence of a strong central authority, internecine conflict has incessantly raged between particularist tribes and clans. Hence Germany has developed what may be called the ‘mark’ mentality. That is to say, she has existed from time immemorial in a continuous state of border warfare. She has always been in a condition either of defending her frontiers against foreign foes, or else, and more often, of trying to extend her territories—to acquire more *Lebensraum*—by encroaching upon the lands of her neighbours.

In no German state has this ‘mark’ mentality been so abnormally developed as in Prussia. Originating in the tenth-century Mark of Brandenburg, a district but recently captured from the Slavs, it owed its continued survival and its piecemeal expansion simply and solely to craft and force. It had not, and it has not, any justification for existence in either geography or history. It is an unnatural State, a wholly artificial State, an inorganic State, a composite State con-

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structed by the sword, an incomplete and incompletable State whose rulers, by the tradition of their office, are constantly compelled to seek expansion at the expense of their fellows.

It is one of the major tragedies of history that the unification of Germany as a national State was not effected at the close of the Middle Age by the Hapsburgs, instead of being left to be completed four hundred years later by the Hohenzollerns. Vienna, with the charm of its inimitable situation, its close association with Classical and Catholic Europe, its fine tradition of art and urbanity, would have been the ideal centre of a unified German nation that could have taken its proper place with the French, Spanish, Italian, British, and other European peoples in a gradually developing Parliament of Man. How is it that the Hapsburgs failed to fulfil their historic mission? The causes were mainly two. On the one hand, when in the fifteenth century they came into permanent possession of the imperial throne, Germany had gone too far in disintegration for its reconstruction and reconsolidation to be easy. As we have seen, its kings had so long devoted their energies to vain efforts to conquer Italy that they had allowed their power in Germany itself to vanish away. The association, moreover, of the German kingship with the visionary office of 'Holy Roman Emperor' had caused the kingship itself to become elective instead of hereditary, and every election had

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provided the occasion for the further diminution of the royal prerogatives. Hence the task of unification and rehabilitation which faced Albert II in 1438 and Frederick III in 1440 was one of supreme difficulty. Neither of them made any serious attempt to undertake it. What Albert might have done we cannot say, for his reign lasted only two years. Frederick, however, held the kingship and empire for more than half a century, and, as we have observed, he ceased altogether to govern, and lapsed into complete ineptitude amid the fowls and the vegetables of his Viennese villa.

The second cause, then, of the failure of Germany to attain unity and nationhood at the close of the Middle Age was the inadequacy of the Hapsburgs for their duties and opportunities. Following the evil example of their Luxemburg predecessors, they concerned themselves mainly with schemes for personal and family aggrandisement. And in acquiring duchies (Styria, Carinthia, Carniola) and kingdoms (Hungary, Bohemia, Spain) they became so preponderantly non-German that finally the unification of Germany required their total expulsion.

Thus it came to pass that the unification of Germany was left to be accomplished not in the normal process of natural growth and in the ordinary manner of political evolution by constitutional monarchs, but belatedly, violently, abnormally, by methods of 'blood and iron' by conquering Prussian

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autocrats. Berlin, least attractive of European capitals, became the unnatural centre of the artificial Reich; Berlin, a city situated amid typical Slavonic swamps and forests, on a river (the Spree) that looks like a sluggish and foul canal; a city flat and bleak, devoid of all grace and charm, a mere military and administrative base.

Characteristic, too, of the mode of Germany's unification is the ominous fact that the two chief heroes of recent German history are Frederick the Great and Bismarck. For these two men are the supreme modern exemplars of the Machiavellian doctrine that in politics the prime instruments of government are limitless force and bottomless fraud —the guiding principles of the lion and the fox, the merciless ferocity of the one and the unscrupulous craftiness of the other.

It is necessary for a prince that will achieve great matters to learn to be a cunning deceiver, for where the deliberation is wholly touching the safety of the Fatherland there ought to be no consideration of just or unjust, pitiful or cruel, honourable or dishonourable, but rather, all other respect being laid aside, that course ought to be taken which may preserve the life and maintain the liberty thereof.

So wrote Machiavelli in his *Discourses*,* and in accordance with these precepts of Machiavelli both Frederick and Bismarck persistently acted. By a

* *Discourses*, Book II, Chapter 13, and Book III, Chapter 41.

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refinement of subtlety, indeed, Frederick early in the very year in which he seized Silesia (1740) published a book, entitled *Anti-Machiavel*, in which, with an unctuous hypocrisy hardly exceeded in any of Herr Hitler's pacific orations, he denounced the immoral doctrines which he was even then preparing so perfectly to illustrate. Similarly, Bismarck flattered himself not only because he had seized by violence numerous territories to which Prussia had no shadow of right—Schleswig, Holstein; Hanover, Hesse; Alsace, Lorraine—but also because in the process he had outwitted and deceived every prominent European statesman of his time—Schwarzenberg, Gortchakoff, Napoleon III, Palmerston, Gladstone—all except, perhaps, Disraeli. For Disraeli he had profound respect, especially after he had seen him in action at Berlin in 1878: 'Der alte Jude, das ist der Mann,' he said.

Both Frederick the Great and Bismarck, however, as exemplars of the Machiavellian principles of the use of force and fraud as instruments of politics, have been far surpassed in both consistency and efficiency by Herr Hitler. He, rather than either of his predecessors, deserves the eulogy which Machiavelli reserved exclusively for Pope Alexander VI, who, he said:

never did anything else than deceive men, and never meant otherwise, and always found whom to work upon. Yet never was there a man who would

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protest more effectually, or aver anything with more solemn oaths and observe less than he. Nevertheless, his deceptions all succeeded, for he knew how to play his part cunningly.*

A brief catalogue of the more conspicuous of Herr Hitler's violent and lawless deeds has already been given—his breach of the Treaties of Versailles and Locarno, his repudiation of his non-aggression pact with Poland, and his naval agreement with Great Britain; his remilitarisation of the Rhineland, his seizure of Austria, his despoilment and final destruction of Czechoslovakia; his occupation of Memel; his invasion of Poland; his growing menace to all his neighbours.

With his deeds it is necessary to compare his words in order to perceive the depths of mendacity and treachery to which Prussianism can descend in its latest and most expert exponent. The dates in all cases are of prime significance.

- (1) *May 17th 1933*: ‘Germany will tread no other path than that laid down by the Treaties.’
- (2) *August 1933*: ‘As long as I am Chancellor there will be no war, save in the event of an invasion of our territory from without.’
- (3) *January 30th 1934*: ‘The German Government is willing and determined to accept in its innermost soul, as well as external formulation, the Pact of Locarno.’

* *The Prince*, Chapter 20.

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- (4) *May 21st 1935*: ‘Germany has neither the wish nor the intention to mix in internal Austrian affairs, or to annex Austria.’
- (5) *March 7th 1936*: ‘Germany will never break the peace of Europe. . . . We have no territorial demands to make in Europe.’
- (6) *May 1st 1936*: ‘The lie goes forth again that Germany tomorrow or the day after will fall upon Austria or Czechoslovakia.’
- (7) *September 13th 1936*: ‘We see in Bolshevism a bestial, mad doctrine which is a threat to us. I cannot make a pact with a régime whose first act is not the liberation of workmen, but of the inmates of gaols.’
- (8) *January 30th 1937*: ‘We look upon Bolshevism as upon an intolerable danger to the world. We shall try to keep this danger away from the German people by every means in our command.’
- (9) *September 26th 1938*: ‘The Sudetenland is the last territorial claim which I have to make in Europe. . . . We do not want any Czechs. . . . We have assured all our immediate neighbours of the integrity of their territory as far as Germany is concerned. That is no hollow phrase: it is our sacred will.’
- (10) *January 1st 1939*: ‘In general we have but one wish—that in the coming year we may be able to make our contribution to the general pacification of the whole world.’

It is clear that Herr Hitler, like Pope Alexander VI, uses language merely to deceive his intended victims and to delude them into a false sense of security.

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It is sometimes asserted that in the present war Britain and her Allies are fighting against one man only, namely Adolf Hitler, and against the system of terrorism and mendacity which he has set up, the system to which the title of 'Hitlerism' has been given. This is not so. True it is that Hitler and Hitlerism are more formidable menaces to the reign of law, the rule of justice, the maintenance of peace, the preservation of freedom, the continued existence of democracy, the life and liberty of all small independent peoples, than have ever arisen in Germany before. But it is not true that they are anything new. They differ only in scale from their predecessors. Hitlerism is merely the revised, enlarged, and more blatant version of the Imperialism of William II, the Nationalism of Bismarck, and the Banditry of Frederick the Great. It is, indeed, merely Prussianism *in excelsis*. And Prussianism—the supreme embodiment of the 'mark' mentality—is only the essence of that unscrupulous aggressiveness which has characterised the Teutonic denizens of Central Europe from time immemorial. The Allies when they have won the present war will have to devise some means by which the civilised world can impose a permanent restraint upon the predatory passions of the chronically dangerous and easily misguided German nation.

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